

# **SHEOL AND RESURRECTION IN THE HEBREW BIBLE**



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## ABSTRACT

In the Hebrew Bible, the two most salient concepts relating to the hereafter or existence beyond death are a) the underworld, or realm of the dead known as שְׁאוֹל *'Sheol'*, and b) the eschatological resurrection of the dead. In so far as both Sheol and resurrection concern the fate or future of the dead, it might seem natural to expect a close association between the two concepts in the biblical text linguistically or thematically. However, there are ostensibly fundamental differences that have led interpreters to draw a distinction between the two. One such difference is the understanding that essentially there is no return from Sheol, whereas resurrection is the return of the dead to bodily existence. Furthermore, Sheol is often viewed as the benchmark of pre-exilic Israelite post-mortem expectations, whereas resurrection is viewed as a post-exilic development with possible foreign origins. The extent to which the above is accurate, in terms of how we understand both the term *Sheol* and biblical resurrection, as well as the relationship or distinctiveness of the two concepts, is the topic of this thesis. In this study, I analyze each of the sixty-six biblical occurrences of Sheol, as well as the key passages relating to biblical resurrection, and provide an exegesis for each passage. In the course of this analysis, I address contextual, lexical and hermeneutical issues, and where it is pertinent, the texts are compared with their reception in the Septuagint and other ancient versions. Ultimately, where it was previously thought that there existed a bifurcation between the ideas of Sheol and resurrection, this study finds evidence for the converse. The biblical portrayal of both concepts displays a theological and thematic overlap, which is shown to be evident in the language and phraseology of the biblical passages analyzed.

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	1
Abstract	2
<i>Abbreviations</i>	6
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
– 1.1. The Biblical Underworld: An Overview	11
- 1.1.1. Occurrences of Sheol	12
- 1.1.2. A Note on the Etymology of Sheol	14
- 1.1.3. Synonyms	16
– 1.2. Purpose of This Study	18
– 1.3. Outline and Method	19
<b>Chapter 2: Sheol in the Torah</b>	<b>22</b>
– 2.1. Genesis	22
- 2.1.1. Gen. 37:35	22
- 2.1.2. Gen. 42:38	26
- 2.1.3. Gen. 44:29	28
- 2.1.4. Gen. 44:31	30
– 2.2. Numbers	31
- 2.2.1. Num. 16:30	31
- 2.2.2. Num. 16:33	36
– 2.3. Deuteronomy 32:22	38
– 2.4. Summary	41
<b>Chapter 3: Sheol in the Prophets</b>	<b>42</b>
– 3.1. The Former Prophets	42
- 3.1.1. 1 Sam. 2:6	43
- 3.1.2. 1 Kgs 2:6	46
- 3.1.3. 1 Kgs 2:9	47
– 3.2. The Latter Prophets	49
- 3.2.1. Isaiah	49
<i>i)</i> Isa. 5:14	50
<i>ii)</i> Isa. 7:11	54
<i>iii)</i> Isa. 14:9, 11, 15	58

iv) Isa. 28:15, 18	67
v) Isa. 38:10, 18	70
vi) Isa. 57:9	73
- 3.2.2. Hos. 13:14	75
- 3.2.3. Am. 9:2	82
- 3.2.4. Jon. 2:3b	85
- 3.2.5. Hab. 2:5	89
- 3.3. Summary	92
<b>Chapter 4: Sheol in the Psalms</b>	<b>93</b>
- 4.1. Psalms	93
- 4.1.1. Ps. 6:6	94
- 4.1.2. Ps. 9:18	96
- 4.1.3. Ps. 16:10	99
- 4.1.4. Ps. 18:6 and 2 Sam. 22:6	101
- 4.1.5. Ps. 30:4	103
- 4.1.6. Ps. 31:18	106
- 4.1.7. Ps. 49:15, 16	108
- 4.1.8. Ps. 55:16	112
- 4.1.9. Ps. 86:13	114
- 4.1.10. Ps. 88:4	116
- 4.1.11. Ps. 89:49	119
- 4.1.12. Ps. 116:3	121
- 4.1.13. Ps. 139:8	122
- 4.1.14. Ps. 141:7	124
- 4.2. Summary	126
<b>Chapter 5: Job in Sheol</b>	<b>127</b>
- 5.1. Job	127
- 5.1.1. Job 7:9	127
- 5.1.2. Job 11:8	131
- 5.1.3. Job 14:13	133
- 5.1.4. Job 17:13-16	136
- 5.1.5. Job 21:13	139
- 5.1.6. Job 24:19	141
- 5.1.7. Job 26:6	143
- 5.2. Summary	145
<b>Chapter 6: Sheol in the Light of Wisdom</b>	<b>146</b>
- 6.1. Proverbs	146

- 6.1.1. Prov. 1:12	146
- 6.1.2. Prov. 5:5	150
- 6.1.3. Prov. 7:27	152
- 6.1.4. Prov. 9:18	154
- 6.1.5. Prov. 15:11	157
- 6.1.6. Prov. 15:24	159
- 6.1.7. Prov. 23:14	161
- 6.1.8. Prov. 27:20	163
- 6.1.9. Prov. 30:16	164
- 6.2. Ecclesiastes 9:10	167
- 6.3. Song of Songs 8:6	170
- 6.4. Summary	172
<b>Chapter 7: Sheol and Resurrection in Ezekiel</b>	<b>174</b>
- 7.1. Underworld Phraseology in Ezekiel	175
- 7.2. Sheol in Ezekiel	181
- 7.2.1. Ezek. 31:14b-18	181
- 7.2.2. Ezek. 32:18-32	185
- 7.2.3. Summary	190
- 7.3. Resurrection in Ezekiel	191
- 7.3.1. Ezek. 37:1-14	192
- 7.3.2. Ezek. 37:15-28	206
- 7.4. Summary	208
<b>Chapter 8: Biblical Resurrection and the Land of Dust</b>	<b>210</b>
- 8.1. Resurrection in the Hebrew Bible	210
- 8.2. Key Biblical Texts Related to Resurrection	211
- 8.2.1. Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6	211
- 8.2.2. 1 Kgs 17, 2 Kgs 4 and 13:20-21	213
- 8.2.3. Hos. 6:1	216
- 8.3. Isaiah	219
- 8.3.1. Isa. 25:7-8	220
- 8.3.2. Isa. 26:19	224
- 8.4. Daniel 12:1-3	231
- 8.4.1. Dan. 12:1	232
- 8.4.2. Dan. 12:2	238
- 8.4.3. Dan. 12:3	243
- 8.5. Summary	246
<b>Chapter 9: Conclusion</b>	<b>249</b>
- 9.1. Sheol	250

- 9.1.1. Chapter 1 251
- 9.1.2. Chapter 2 252
- 9.1.3. Chapter 3 253
- 9.1.4. Chapter 4 257
- 9.1.5. Chapter 5 260
- 9.1.6. Chapter 6 263
- 9.2. Resurrection 264
  - 9.2.1. Chapter 7 265
  - 9.2.2. Chapter 8 267
- 9.3. Future Research 271

**Bibliography 273**

## ABBREVIATIONS

### Citation of Biblical Sources

#### Old Testament

All Old Testament texts are cited according to their Hebrew numeration

Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., Deut., Josh., Judg., Sam., Kgs, Isa., Jer., Ezek., Hos., Joel, Am., Ob., Jon., Mic., Nah., Hab., Zeph., Hag., Zech., Mal., Ps./Pss., Job, Prov., Ruth, Song, Eccl., Lam., Esth., Dan., Ezra, Neh., Chron.

#### Apocrypha/Pseudepigrapha

Tob., Macc., Wis., Enoch

#### New Testament

Matt., Mark, Luke, John, Cor.

#### Bible Versions

ASV	<i>American Standard Version (1901)</i>
AV/KJV	<i>Authorized Version/King James Version</i>
CEB	<i>Common English Bible (CEB, 2011)</i>
CJB	<i>Complete Jewish Bible (MJP, 2017)</i>
DRA	<i>Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition</i>
ESV	<i>English Standard Version (Crossway, 2015)</i>
ISV	<i>International Standard Version (ISV Foundation, 2013)</i>

JPS	<i>Jewish Publication Society</i> (JPS, 1985)
LEB	<i>Lexham English Bible</i> (Logos Bible Software, 2012)
NASB	<i>New American Standard Bible</i> (Anaheim: Foundation, 1998)
NIV	<i>New International Version</i> (Zondervan, 2011)
NKJV	<i>New King James Version</i> (Thomas Nelson, 1982)
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i> (OUP, 1989)
OJB	<i>Orthodox Jewish Bible</i> (Afi Intl, 2010)
RSV	<i>Revised Standard Version</i> (OUP, 1952)
WYC	<i>Wycliffe Bible</i> (Terence P. Noble: 2001)
YLT	<i>Young's Literal Translation</i> (Baker Books, 1989)

## General

ANET	J. B. Pritchard (ed.), <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969).
BDAG	F. W. Danker (ed.), <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago, London: University of Chicago).
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Oxford: OUP, 1907).
BHS	K. Elliger and W. Rudolf (eds.), <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983).
GK	W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, A. E. Cowley, <i>Hebrew Grammar</i> (New York: Dover).
HALOT	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Leiden: Brill, 2000).
HB	Hebrew Bible
JM	P. Joüon, SJ and T. Muraoka, <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006).
L&S	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>Greek-English Lexicon: With a Revised Supplement</i> , ninth ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).
LXX	The Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NETS	Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (eds.), <i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> (Oxford: OUP, 2007).
NIDOTTE	W. A. VanGemeren (ed.), <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997).

TDOT	G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–).
TGL	Joseph H. Thayer, James Strong, <i>Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers</i> (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996).
TWOT	R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer and B. K. Waltke (eds.), <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> (Chicago: Moody, 1980).

## Journals

AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BETS	<i>Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BIP	<i>Biblical Institute Press</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BRB	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BW	<i>The Biblical World</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
Dialog	<i>Dialog: A Journal of Theology</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBQ	<i>Jewish Biblical Quarterly</i>
JBR	<i>The Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTsup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LSTS	<i>Library of Second Temple Studies</i>
MS	<i>Mission Studies</i>
NTsup	<i>Novum Testamentum Supplement Series</i>
Numen	<i>Numen: International Review for the History of Religions</i>
OTS	<i>The Old Testament Student</i>
PIB	<i>Pontificum Institutum Biblicum</i>
Prooftexts	<i>Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>
Scriptura	<i>Scriptura: Journal for Biblical, Theological and Contextual Hermeneutics</i>
Textus	<i>Textus: A Journal on Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible</i>
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum Supplement</i>
WUNT	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>

**Series and Publishers**

ABC	Anchor Bible Commentary
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary Series
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BO	Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CC	Concordia Commentary
DCLY	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
Hermeneia	Hermeneia Commentary Series
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HUP	Harvard University Press
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IES	Israel Exploration Society
IVP	Inter-Varsity Press
JPSC	The Jewish Publication Society Commentary
JPSTC	The Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
LBH/OTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
MP	Marshall Pickering
MUP	Mercer University Press
NCB	New Century Bible
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTM	Old Testament Message
OUP	Oxford University Press
PUP	Princeton University Press
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SCMTC	Student Christian Movement Theological Commentary
SCS	Septuagint Commentary Series
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SPP	Sheffield Phoenix Press
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
UP	University Press
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
YUP	Yale University Press

All Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

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## INTRODUCTION

In his commentary on the book of Daniel, John J. Collins (1993: 394) writes in an excursus on resurrection that, regarding the afterlife, the “standard view in ancient Israel was that the dead had a shadowy afterlife in Sheol, where they could not even praise the Lord”. Similarly, John Day (1996: 231) writes that “until the postexilic development of belief in a more worthwhile afterlife it was held by the ancient Israelites that the destination of all human beings after death, irrespective of moral quality or social status, was a dark, gloomy underworld cavern akin to the Greek Hades, known as Sheol”.

Asserting the above distinction between the two notions of Sheol and resurrection is understandable when the conspicuous lack of direct references to resurrection in the Hebrew Bible (HB) is compared with the sixty-six biblical occurrences of the word שְׁאוֹל, along with its attendant synonyms and phraseology. Furthermore, there is only one certain biblical reference to a literal resurrection: Dan. 12:2. There, it appears that the resurrected dead are a limited number who are raised to judgment, where some will experience ‘*everlasting life*’ and some ‘*everlasting shame and reproach*’. However, while Sheol is also absent from this passage, those resurrected are said to wake ‘*from those who sleep in the earth of dust*’ (מִי־שְׁנֵי אֲדָמַת־עֶפֶר), a phrase which might be read as phraseology that is synonymous with aspects of what we know about Sheol.

This study begins with the presumption that the word *Sheol* in the HB denotes the underworld and place of the dead, as is commonly understood. In certain respects, the Hebrew Sheol is not unlike

the Greek *Hades* and other underworlds of ancient Israel's neighbours. In other words, the Israelites in the biblical period, like other ancient cultures, held comparable notions regarding death and entry into the grave with both its terrestrial and otherworldly dimensions. In this way, one might say that the concept of an underworld of the dead was to an extent a cross-cultural and free-floating concept in the ancient world and one that was broadly accepted as part of the process and experience of death. However, as we will see, Sheol in its biblical context is highly nuanced and multifaceted. The poetic and narrative contexts in which it occurs impart a level of poetic pliability to the word with characteristics that are unique to the HB both linguistically and culturally. These nuances, and the diverse ways that the biblical authors discuss and write about Sheol, far from precluding other possibilities beyond death, or reinforcing the supposed bifurcation between Sheol and resurrection (however late it may actually be), instead appear to link very naturally with notions of some form of an afterlife. In this way, the biblical portrayal of Sheol may also have partly facilitated the development of resurrection. As Collins (1993: 394) also notes, there were indicators in the HB that were conducive to belief in a more significant and blessed afterlife, such as the desire for continuous enjoyment in the presence of God, as we find in Ps. 73:23-26, for instance.

## **1. 1. THE BIBLICAL UNDERWORLD: AN OVERVIEW**

The foundation of this thesis is, of course, the Hebrew word שְׁאוֹל *'Sheol'*, which requires some essential background.

Sheol is the name that interpreters have long held denotes the ancient Israelite equivalent of the wider concept of the underworld of the dead, as it is known from other ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures. Sheol never bears the definite article, and thus appears as a proper place name

for the Hebrew underworld of the dead.<sup>1</sup> Sheol appears in all sections of the HB, but seldom does it turn up in narrative texts with unadorned or prosaic details that would help us to construct a uniform exposition of the Hebrew underworld. That being said, the name, as Johnston (2002: 77) notes, “appears almost exclusively in Old Testament Hebrew”.<sup>2</sup>

The connection with the Greek Hades is especially pertinent here for the fact that Sheol is frequently translated as ᾍδης ‘*Hades*’ in the Septuagint (LXX). While this interpretation of Sheol is not inaccurate at its most basic level, this thesis finds that the biblical portrayal of Sheol is highly nuanced with a range of different emphases, and thereby exhibits its own distinct character. Furthermore, it is important to note that the LXX’s use of ᾍδης is not a matter of mere translation, but interpretation. The name Hades is also used more frequently in the LXX than Sheol in the HB, and is only used to translate sixty-one out of the sixty-six biblical occurrences of Sheol. This fact demonstrates that the name Hades does not migrate to a Jewish framework in the LXX with exactly the same meaning, and is perhaps, as Joosten (2010: 2) puts it, an attempt at “saying Jewish things in Greek”.

### 1.1.1. Occurrences of Sheol

There are sixty-six occurrences of Sheol in the HB.<sup>3</sup>

**Torah** (7 occurrences): Gen. 37:35, 42:38, 44:29, 31; Num. 16:30, 33; Deut. 32:22

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<sup>1</sup> Johnston (2002: 71).

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that Syriac ܫܝܘܠ ‘*Sheyol*’ is not a transcription of the Hebrew. I am not aware of any etymological work addressing this issue. It may, however, be a transliteration based on pronunciation. While the present thesis does not permit space for this question, it is certainly worth pursuing in a future study. In any case, I am indebted to Jan Joosten for this observation.

<sup>3</sup> Though the occurrence in Isa. 7:11 is not pointed in the same manner as other occurrences, I maintain that it is a true occurrence of Sheol. See analysis at 3.2.1. *ii*).

**Prophets** (24 occurrences): 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Sam. 22:6; 1 Kgs 2:6, 9; Isa. 5:14, 7:11, 14:9, 11, 15, 28:15, 18, 38:10, 18, 57:9; Ezek. 31:15, 16, 17, 32:21, 27; Hos. 13:14 (2x); Am. 9:2; Jon. 2:3; Hab. 2:5

**Writings** (35 occurrences) Ps. 6:6, 9:18, 16:10, 18:6, 30:4, 31:18, 49:15, 16 (2x), 55:16, 86:13, 88:4, 89:49, 116:3, 139:8, 141:7; Job 7:9, 11:8, 14:13, 17:13, 16, 21:13, 24:19, 26:6; Prov. 1:12, 5:5, 7:27, 9:18, 15:11, 24, 23:14, 27:20, 30:16; Eccl. 9:10; Song 8:6

Apart from the biblical occurrences, there appears to be only one certain attestation of Sheol in the biblical period outside of the HB.<sup>4</sup> This appears in an Aramaic text (71:15) from the Jewish community at Elephantine in Southern Egypt, which dates to the fifth century B.C.E. The line reads:

באלך וגרמיך לא יחתון שאול וטללך

*'In these, and your bones will not descend into Sheol, nor your shadow'*<sup>5</sup>

This sentence appears to be part of a story about an individual named Bar Punesh who is lauded for his great military service to the king. The text is only fragmentary, so the context is skewed and it is, therefore, difficult to interpret the meaning of this line properly. Furthermore, Hor bar Punesh is the name of a well-known magician in Demotic literature,<sup>6</sup> which further problematizes the interpretation of Sheol here.

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<sup>4</sup> Johnston (2002: 77).

<sup>5</sup> Cowley (1923: 179-81; no. 71:15). For bones and Sheol, cf. Ezek. 32:27; Ps. 141:7.

<sup>6</sup> Gianto (1995: 90).

### 1.1.2. A Note on the Etymology of Sheol

The etymology of Sheol has been covered thoroughly by a number of scholars and I do not aim to reiterate their work in any exhaustive way here.<sup>7</sup> However, for the present purpose of this thesis, certain highlights of earlier scholarly work on Sheol's etymology are worth mentioning.

Along with attempts at identifying a Hebrew root, many scholars have also sought to link Sheol with various Near Eastern underworld deities and place names or to find a plausible etymology with the help of other Semitic languages.

Johnston (2002: 78) notes that until recently, Sheol appeared to be uniquely a Hebrew term, as no cognate of Hebrew שְׁאוֹל had ever been successfully identified. Johnston also discusses various proposals by Dahood and others viewing possible links between Sheol and certain place names or minor deities. Of particular importance is Arnaud's (1986) identification of the deity *šū-wa-la* mentioned in two *kissu*-festival texts in Akkadian as an underworld deity called Sheol. While this identification is not conclusive, the possible connection with Sheol remains for the fact that, as Johnston (79) observes, *šū-wa-la* appears alongside other underworld deities in the aforementioned texts.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, a positive identification of Sheol as an underworld deity elsewhere in the ancient Near East could potentially help to elucidate texts where Sheol is thought to be personified, such as Prov. 1:12, 27:20, 30:16, Song 8:6, Hos. 13:14, and Hab. 2:5.

A well-known proposal for a Hebrew origin of the name 'Sheol' is that it derives from the root שָׂאָה, "to lie desolate", with the addition of a suffixed ל, which is perhaps similar to כָּרַם plus ל, which

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed survey, see Johnston (1993: 7-14; 2002: 77-79). Other surveys include: Albright (1918: 209-10); Rosenberg (1981: 2-12); Spronk (1986: 66f); Wildberger (1978: 548).

<sup>8</sup> See Johnston's discussion (2002: 77-79).

gives us כרמל “plantation” or “orchard”.<sup>9</sup> Yet here it is still maintained that the etymology remains uncertain.<sup>10</sup>

The most obvious Hebrew root one would derive from the spelling of Sheol is the verb שאל ‘to ask’, which readily connects with the forbidden practice of necromancy.<sup>11</sup> This would imply that inquiry is Sheol’s most fundamental attribute, which is an inadequate assessment in light of the complex biblical portrayal of Sheol.<sup>12</sup> That being said, identifying שאל as the root may not be entirely inaccurate. If, for instance, the etymology of Sheol is a case of Occam’s razor, then שאל ought to make some sense.

Jarick (1999: 29-30) makes a notable observation in connection to the secondary version of King Saul’s downfall in 1 Chron. 10:13-14, where we read: וגם לשאול באוב לדרוש ‘*And also he consulted a medium for guidance*’. Jarick notes that the infinitive construct form שאל appears where the finite form of the verb would be perfectly appropriate. Is this indeed a paronomasia and allusion to Sheol? Notably, Saul’s name is of course שאל ‘asked for’, and in 1 Sam. 28:6-7 the absence of any mention of Sheol is perhaps deliberate. It is not difficult to see how the orthography of Sheol would lend itself to wordplay in these two passages. Jarick (32) also suggests that the place of the dead “about which we know next to nothing... is a place with a huge question mark over it”. In this way, Sheol may be literary moniker or pun with שאל as its root used to denote the unknown aspects of death, what is unseen, or that which is only known to God (Job 26:6; Prov. 15:11). We might also compare this idea with the naming of the bread from heaven in Ex. 16 as מן, as they did not know what it was (Ex. 16:15).<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Sheol, with its root as שאל connoting the unknown aspects of death, may partly

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<sup>9</sup> HALOT: 498-499.

<sup>10</sup> HALOT: 1367-1368; Spronk (1986: 66). For כרמל/כרם see HALOT: 498; BDB: 501-502.

<sup>11</sup> Johnston (2002: 78); BDB: 982.

<sup>12</sup> Johnston (2002: 78).

<sup>13</sup> I am indebted to James Patrick for this suggestion.

reflect the rationale behind the LXX's choice of Hades for translating sixty-one of the sixty-six biblical occurrences of Sheol. Papaioannou (2013: 86), for example, notes that the Greek ἄδης may be derived from the verb ἰδεῖν 'to see' with the addition of the negative prefix ἄ making it 'unseen'.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.1.3. Synonyms

Here, I will briefly cover the four main synonyms of Sheol that are used throughout the HB referring to the underworld: בּוֹר *bor*, בְּאֵר *b<sup>e</sup>ēr*, שְׁחַת *šḥat*, and אַבְדּוֹן *ʾabaddon*.<sup>15</sup> To these four I will add a fifth: עֵפֶר *ʿāpār*.

By far the most common of these, בּוֹר, occurs sixty-nine times. It can be used to refer to a well, cistern, a dungeon, a pit, or a grave.<sup>16</sup> Its primary importance as a synonym for Sheol is as part of the construct phrase בּוֹר יוֹרְדֵי 'those who descend to the pit'.

The related term בְּאֵר occurs thirty-seven times,<sup>17</sup> and similarly refers to a well, but also a bitumen pit, and in 2 Sam. 17:18-19 the well is converted to a hiding place.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, at 2 Sam. 23:20, the spelling with a middle aleph is attested where the noun refers to a pit for trapping a lion. While these meanings are not especially important for understanding Sheol, בְּאֵר, in a rather unique way, unambiguously signifies the underworld in Pss. 55:24 and 69:15, and is therefore counted as a synonym for Sheol.

The third major synonym for Sheol, שְׁחַת, occurs twenty-three times in the HB. When referring to the underworld, שְׁחַת often refers to the desired fate of the wicked. Significantly, of the twenty-three

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<sup>14</sup> Papaioannou does not provide a source for this point but this etymology appears to be derived from an older form of the name Hades in classical Greek literature: Ἄϊδης. See TGL: 11.

<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive study of Sheol synonyms, see especially Johnston (1993: 20-26).

<sup>16</sup> BDB: 92.

<sup>17</sup> Johnston (2002: 84).

<sup>18</sup> BDB: 91; Johnston (2002: 84).

occurrences of *שְׁחַת*, the term refers to the underworld fifteen times in eleven passages.<sup>19</sup> Two more occurrences (Pss. 9:15 and 94:13) contain underworld allusions.<sup>20</sup>

While the first three synonyms refer to pits, cisterns, traps, and sometimes graves, the fourth, *אֲבֵרוֹן*, can be treated as another name for the underworld, as it is paired with Sheol three times: Job 26:6 and Prov. 15:11, 27:20.<sup>21</sup> It is derived from the root *אָבַד* “qal: perish; piel: cause to perish; hiphil: destroy”,<sup>22</sup> and if construed as another name for the underworld, it might then be thought of as a place of destruction or annihilation.

Here I aim to argue for an equally significant, and therefore, fifth underworld synonym: *עֶפֶר* ‘dust’. In a variety of contexts, *עֶפֶר* seems to Job 7:21, 20:11 and 21:26, *עֶפֶר* becomes a poetic synonym for the grave, wherein one *lies down* (*שָׁכַב*) upon it. In Ps. 22:16, there is the phrase *הַשְׁפַּתְנִי הָעֶפֶר מוֹת* ‘and to the dust of death you set me’. Ps. 22:30 also corroborates the association of *עֶפֶר* with Sheol or the grave in the phrase *כָּל־יֹרְדֵי עֶפֶר* ‘all those who descend into the dust’. This phrase is likely derived from the more common allusion to the underworld *בּוֹר יֹרְדֵי*.<sup>23</sup> Ps. 30:10 alludes to the underworld with the use of *שְׁחַת*, and then asks *הֲיִוְדָךְ עֶפֶר* ‘Will the dust praise you?’, which appears to be a metonym for the dead themselves. Finally, *עֶפֶר* functions as a synonym for Sheol most notably in Job 17:16 (see analysis at 5.1.4.). The human body is of course also made of *עֶפֶר*, and in death humanity returns to *הָעֶפֶר* and this may refer to the impermanence and transience of human life (Gen. 2:7, 3:19, Job 4:19, 8:19, 10:9, 34:15; Ps. 103:14, 104:29; Eccl. 3:20, 12:7).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Job 17:14, 33:18, 22, 24, 28, 30; Pss. 16:10, 30:10, 49:10, 55:24, 103:4; Isa. 38:17, 51:14; Ezek. 28:8; Jon. 2:7.

<sup>20</sup> Johnston (2002: 84f).

<sup>21</sup> Johnston (2002: 85).

<sup>22</sup> BDB: 2.

<sup>23</sup> For more on this phrase, see below: 2.2., 6.1.1. and 7.1.

<sup>24</sup> Hayden (NIDOTTE, 3: 472). TDOT (11: 264).

## 1.2. PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine each of the sixty-six biblical occurrences of Sheol, along with the key biblical passages relating to resurrection. First, my aim is to problematize Sheol and explain how the word is employed by the biblical authors with an emphasis on questions of meaning, function, nature and ontology. I then seek to establish the nature of biblical resurrection as the scriptural and cultural point of departure for the development of the later Jewish and Christian belief in the collective resurrection of the dead. One of the main questions to be asked is whether the concept of Sheol, as the gloomy underworld from where there was no return, and as the so-called “standard view” in ancient Israel, necessarily precluded the possibility of an afterlife, and especially resurrection. If this is the case, then the aforementioned bifurcation between the two concepts is reasonable. My suspicion, however, is that this is not the case and that resurrection fits naturally within the sphere of Sheol and the underworld texts.

The text-critical and exegetical analysis of Sheol will elucidate the biblical underworld as the place of the dead or grave in a generic sense. This analysis will also aim to show that Sheol functions as a poetic term with free-form pliability that, rather than precluding the possibility of other notions regarding the post-mortem fate of the dead, was able to accommodate these notions of the hereafter within its purview. In answering this question, key biblical passages traditionally associated with resurrection, acting either as metaphors or literal references to the concept, will be examined in a similar critical manner to my analysis of Sheol in its various biblical contexts.

Sheol is a term or name that may be examined linguistically to determine its meaning and function and I expect that a text-critical analysis and exegesis will account for the important details in a more exacting way. Resurrection, of course, is not a word in the HB but a theme that appears most clearly in only a handful of biblical texts. That being said, both Sheol and resurrection relate to what

happens to the dead. For this reason, we can expect to find closely related language in both Sheol and resurrection passages.

The main purpose of this two-pronged approach then (a word study on Sheol, alongside a critical examination of key biblical texts containing the theme of resurrection) is to highlight linguistic connections or overlaps between Sheol and resurrection texts and thereby establish a conceptual and theological link between them. I aim to demonstrate that the development of thought on the afterlife in ancient Israel was not a situation where one standard idea (Sheol) gave way to another distinctly different one (resurrection) in a later period but that key features associated with Sheol directly fed into the development of the later belief in the resurrection.

### **1.3. OUTLINE AND METHOD**

The structure of this thesis is simple. The problem of Sheol and resurrection in the HB has so far been introduced here in Chapter 1, along with the essential background to our current understanding of the foundation of this thesis being Sheol. Chapters 2 to 6 cover all sixty-six biblical occurrences of Sheol by way of a text-critical and exegetical analysis of Sheol in each context where it occurs. Excluded here are the occurrences in Ezek. 31 and 32, which will be covered in chapter 7. These occurrences of Sheol are presented alongside an analysis of the well-known resurrection metaphor in Ezek. 37. Chapter 8 addresses biblical resurrection specifically and provides a detailed study of the foremost biblical reference to the concept, Dan. 12:2, as well as an overview of key passages relating to resurrection. Chapter 9 is my conclusion.

The order in which I have presented the sixty-six occurrences of Sheol roughly corresponds to that of the HB with the exceptions of Ezek. 31 and 32, Eccl. 9:10, and Song 8:6. As noted, Ezek. 31 and 32 appear in chapter 7 alongside my analysis of resurrection in Ezek. 37. Eccl. 9:10 and Song 8:6 appear at the end of chapter 6: *Sheol in the Light of Wisdom*. While I am not making any claims of

authorship, these two occurrences are grouped together with those from the Book of Proverbs for the convenience of their association with Solomon and the wisdom tradition.

Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the seven occurrences of Sheol in Genesis, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The summary highlights the main emphases and immediate diversity of this small group of examples. While the four examples of Sheol in Genesis appear to resemble the Greek Hades, or the common grave, in Num. 16 Sheol becomes part of the horrific and supernatural punishment of Korah and his followers. This incident in Num. 16 then appears to resemble other examples of Sheol elsewhere, as well as certain features that perhaps become part of a theme of Sheol as a voracious monster. The example in Deut. 32 adds yet a different emphasis, where Sheol is an extreme locale in the cosmos.

Chapter 3 provides an analysis of each of the occurrences found in the books of both the so-called former and latter prophets with the exclusion of the occurrences in Ezek. 31 and 32. It will be shown here that the occurrences of Sheol in the prophets display an extremely diverse range of features and emphases, and the summary will highlight the complexity of Sheol's character in the prophetic imagination in terms of mythological provenance, personifications of Sheol, ontology, the question of deification, necromancy, and abstract usage of the word.

Chapters 4 to 6 cover the occurrences of Sheol in the third major division of the HB. Each chapter provides an analysis of fourteen occurrences of Sheol in the Psalms, eight in the book of Job, and nine in the book of Proverbs. For the Psalms, two main emphases stand out: Sheol as a place aligned with the wicked, and the possibility of deliverance therefrom. In Job, descriptions of the underworld, darkness, death, sin and suffering abound, and possibly also the hope for an afterlife, or future life, especially in chapter 14. In Proverbs, Sheol is consistently the result of folly and is set in contrast to that of the rewards and the good life in the light of wisdom. As noted, the miscellaneous occurrences of Eccl. 9:10 and Song 8:6 are added here. While Song of Songs is not wisdom literature, it is added here for its traditional connection with Solomon, but also for its function. Song 8:6 compares the

ferociousness of love with that of death and Sheol with the effect of implying the insatiability of Sheol and the grave as essential to its character.

As in the earlier chapters, for the five occurrences of Sheol in Ezek. 31:15-17 and 32:21, 27, the same text-critical and exegetical approach is applied. These are presented in Chapter 7 alongside the analysis of the resurrection metaphor in Ezek. 37. Linguistic repetition prevalent in the book of Ezekiel is noted throughout the analysis of all three chapters with the aim of highlighting stylistic consistency. While I am not primarily concerned with authorship, such features, including a consistent and repeated underworld phraseology, as well as the author's concern for the rise and fall of nations in the contexts of both Sheol and resurrection, effectively underscore a conceptual and metaphorical link between these chapters and potentially between Sheol and resurrection.

Finally, chapter 8 will discuss in particular the HB's portrayal of resurrection. Key biblical passages and terminology that appear to intimate survival beyond death, hope in an afterlife, or a return to life are considered as possible antecedents to the later postexilic belief in the resurrection. These will be discussed in relation to the possible origins and development of resurrection, but also Sheol and the underworld. In particular, detailed analysis and discussion of Dan. 12:1-3 and Isa. 26:19, will complement the preceding material and serve to highlight specific overlaps in the language of Sheol and resurrection. Additionally, this chapter will largely argue in favour of an internal origin of Jewish resurrection. In view of earlier scholarly theories regarding the possible Persian origins of the Jewish belief in the resurrection, comparisons with Persian or Zoroastrian resurrection are also highlighted where appropriate.

The conclusion brings together the summaries from each section of the thesis and seeks to finally establish and clarify the link between Sheol and resurrection, and thereby provide a sufficiently detailed macro-perspective of the fate of the dead, as it is portrayed in the HB. The conclusion will also provide my thoughts on the future potential of this research.

## SHEOL IN THE TORAH

There are seven occurrences of Sheol in the Torah: Gen. 37:35, 42:38, 44:29, 31; Num. 16:30, 33; Deut. 32:22. Apart from Deut. 32:22, each occurrence appears in a narrative context. What is immediately striking is the markedly different emphases on display in these seven occurrences.

Sheol in Genesis appears to be referred to more generally as the grave, and perhaps also the inevitable underworld for Jacob following Joseph. In Num. 16, Sheol is part of a supernatural orifice in the earth that swallows Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and all who rebelled against Moses. In Deut. 32:22, however, Sheol functions primarily as a cosmological extremity.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.1. GENESIS

#### 2.1.1. Gen. 37:35

*Then all of his sons and all of his daughters arose to console him, but he refused to be consoled and said, “for I will go down to my son mourning to Sheol”. Thus his father wept for him.*

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<sup>25</sup> Johnston (2002: 80).

Here, in Gen. 37:35, Jacob is in mourning over the loss of his beloved son Joseph convinced that he has been devoured by a wild animal according to the false witness of his brothers (verses 32-33). The ritual details of Jacob's mourning are given in verse 34: he has torn his garments, donned sackcloth, and has been in mourning for many days. Jacob's children attempt to console him, but he refuses to be consoled and exclaims that he will descend into Sheol to be reunited with Joseph.

This is the first occurrence of Sheol in the HB.<sup>26</sup> The sentence spoken by Jacob in 35b is our main concern, as it further informs the following three occurrences of Sheol in Genesis. It is important to note that these occurrences, in addition to 1 Kgs 2:6 and Eccl. 9:10, are the only examples of Sheol that may fit the model of a Hebrew equivalent to an indiscriminate abode of the dead with regard to the righteous and wicked.

For Jacob's statement in 35b, '*for I will go down to my son mourning to Sheol*', a range of interpretations are available. However, the tendency of interpreters is to read far more into the passage than is commensurate with the actual content.

Westermann (1982: 44) views the expression of going down to Sheol as belonging to the period of the narrator, as opposed to the patriarchal period, and furthermore that *Sheol* is a non-Israelite term. While dating is not unimportant, it is difficult to determine that Sheol belongs to any given period with any real certainty, especially given the aforementioned difficulties with the etymology of Sheol. Nevertheless, Westermann's definition of Sheol as "wasteland, no-land, underworld" reflects the general understanding of Sheol.

Hamilton (1995: 428) compares Jacob's expression of descending into Sheol with the Ugaritic texts of Baal and Mot KTU 1.6.I.7-8; KTU 1.5.VI.24-25. There, after hearing of Baal's death, the god Latipan (El) proclaims, *atr b'l'ard b'ars* "After Baal I would go down into the earth". It is well-known that the cognate *ars* generally denotes the underworld in Ugaritic. However, despite such attempts to

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<sup>26</sup> For שְׂאֵלָה '*to Sheol*', the versions read, LXX: εἰς ᾗδου '*to Hades*'; Syr: ܫܘܠܐ '*to Sh'ol*'; TgOnk: לשאול; TgPsJon: לבי קבורתא '*to the house of the grave*'. The locative ה in the MT complements אֶל־בְּנֵי and serves to clarify the distinction between this life and Sheol as the grave or place of the dead.

demonstrate the opposite, only a few occurrences of  $\text{גֵּרִי}$  in the HB are possible allusions to the underworld (cf. Gen. 2:6; Ex. 15:12; Isa. 29:4, 44:23; Jon. 2:7; Ps. 147:6; Job 10:21-22).<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the mythology of Baal and Mot describes events in the lives of deities, whereas the Genesis account describes events in the lives of Israel's patriarchs. On the surface, Gen. 37:35 and the Ugaritic text may bear some resemblance but only if taken out of their respective contexts. If one accepts the Ugaritic connection, however, then the Genesis text more likely functions polemically as an anti-polytheistic origin story. In this way, the venerated patriarchs replace the Canaanite deities. Clearly, further parallels would need to be demonstrated to support such an interpretation. Moreover, such a reading is neither obvious nor instructive when the greater context of the Joseph narrative does not concern itself with Canaanite deities.

Hamilton further suggests that if the above Ugaritic connection can indeed be maintained, then Jacob's descent into the underworld is intended as a ritual descent. In verse 34, Jacob's extended mourning period, the tearing of his garments and wearing of sackcloth do seem to indicate a ritual mourning observance. However, there are few details that would support Hamilton's assertion that some form of a "ritual descent" into the underworld is intended. Nor is it clear what he means to say by this. A ritual descent involving performed ordinances again requires more from the text than it provides. Rather, Jacob's intention to remain in mourning until he descends into Sheol to be with Joseph is a euphemism for his own death and one that more likely expresses the magnitude of his grief.

For Levenson (2006: 78) Jacob's expected descent into Sheol is based on his adverse circumstances in life and Sheol represents the continuation of that negativity and grief in death. Levenson also describes Joseph's death and residence in Sheol as the continuation of what Jacob believes has happened to him; that is, Joseph has experienced an untimely and horrific death and for this reason, Jacob expects that his son will be in Sheol.<sup>28</sup> While Jacob's present circumstances are

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<sup>27</sup> For a comprehensive study on the interpretation of Hebrew  $\text{גֵּרִי}$  as the underworld, see Johnston (1993: 27-43; 2002: 99-114).

<sup>28</sup> Also, Skinner (1956: 449); Gunkel (1997: 394).

characterized by terrible grief, and the phrase *אֶל-בְּנֵי אַבְלָה שְׂאֵלָה* does seem to imply that he expects to meet Joseph in the underworld, this is not necessarily the sole reason for Sheol's mention. Eccl. 9:10, for instance, seems to suggest that even if all people die and go to Sheol, living a life in joy, peace and prosperity before descending into Sheol is possible (see analysis at 6.2.). Perhaps Jacob's refusal to be comforted is, as has been suggested, reflective of his desire to be close to Joseph and continue his mourning ritual for the remainder of his life before descending into Sheol himself, however undesirable Sheol would otherwise be.<sup>29</sup> That said, it is clearly a dramatic statement and an outward demonstration of his terrible grief.<sup>30</sup>

In the context of the present narrative, Jacob's desire to be in Sheol with his son is an emphatically emotional statement in light of his grief. In this way, the term 'Sheol' is perhaps employed by the author as a poetic device in order to dramatize Jacob's grief. This is not to say that the underworld is not present here. The language of descent (*אֶרֶד* plus Sheol bearing the directive *ה*) and the implication of being reunited with Joseph in the phrase *אֶל-בְּנֵי אַבְלָה* do appear to describe the underworld of the dead.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, some scholars suggest that *אֶל-בְּנֵי אַבְלָה* plus *שְׂאֵלָה* may reflect Jacob's actual beliefs about death and the underworld,<sup>32</sup> but this is difficult to know for certain. That being said, various elements of the narrative, along with the mention of Sheol, serve to build on and intensify the drama: Joseph's brothers throw him into an empty cistern and strip him of his multicoloured robe, the symbol of Jacob's special love for him and the reason for his brother's treachery; Jacob has been in mourning for *יָמִים רַבִּים* 'many days', which seems to indicate a

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<sup>29</sup> Westermann (1996: 17).

<sup>30</sup> So Skinner (1956: 449); Wenham (1994: 356).

<sup>31</sup> *אֶרֶד* 'I will go down' – For fourteen of the twenty-seven occurrences of Sheol where the verb *אֶרֶד* appears, the LXX uses *καταβαίνω* 'to move downward, come/go/climb down' (BDAG: 513-14) for *אֶרֶד*: Gen. 37:35; Num. 16:30, 33; Isa. 5:14, 14:11, 15; Ezek. 31:15, 17, 32:21, 27; Ps. 30:4, 88:5; Job 7:9, 17:16.

<sup>32</sup> So Skinner (1910: 449); Westermann (1982: 44); Wenham (1994: 357); Hamilton (1995: 428); Gunkel (1997: 394).

disproportionate amount of time,<sup>33</sup> and he intends to do so for the remainder of his life;<sup>34</sup> and finally, Joseph is the son of his old age and is loved by Jacob more than his brothers (verse 3), a fact that presumably breaks with familial traditions.<sup>35</sup> The phrase אֶל-בְּנֵי אֲבִל שְׂאֵלָה may imply that Jacob expects Joseph to be in Sheol due to the nature of what he has been led to believe about his death, but the continuation in Sheol of Joseph's adverse circumstances prior to death is an idea that is thus far implicit only in this passage. Furthermore, as Johnston (2002: 81) observes, in the accounts of the actual deaths of Jacob and Joseph, Sheol is not mentioned and nor would it be appropriate. Their actual deaths were not ultimately tragic, untimely or miserable, but this is perhaps why Sheol is mentioned at the point in the narrative when Jacob is in mourning believing that the worst has happened to Joseph. As Barr (1992: 29) notes: "Though there is no formal demarcation on moral grounds, actual talk of Sheol generally attaches to sinister characters and sinister events".

### 2.1.2. Gen. 42:38

*But he said, "My son will not go down with you, for his brother has died, and he alone remains. If harm should encounter him on the path that you are to walk, you will bring down my grey hair in sorrow to Sheol."*

In Gen. 42, Joseph has become governor of the land of Egypt and is charged by Pharaoh with selling grain to the famished Egyptians. When ten of his brothers (excluding Benjamin) arrive to buy grain from him, he accuses them of being spies, even though he recognizes them. To test their honesty,

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<sup>33</sup> Wenham (1994: 356).

<sup>34</sup> The versions use the participle for אֲבִל 'mourning'. LXX: πενθῶν; Syr: participle with the subordinating conjunction (כִּד 'when, while') plus enclitic personal pronoun (Robinson, 2002: 47). Likewise, TgOnk: כִּיד אֲבִילנָא; TgPsJon: כִּד אֲבִילנָא, minus the pronoun. The adjective in the MT following the verb plus accusative may serve to describe Jacob's present state of mental anguish (see GK §118n), and also indicates that Jacob intends to remain in mourning until his own death.

<sup>35</sup> Skinner (1956: 449).

Joseph then orders nine of his brothers, keeping Simeon for insurance purposes, to return to Canaan and bring back their youngest brother Benjamin. When the brothers return to Jacob in Canaan and deliver the news, the old man, believing that Joseph is already dead, refuses to allow them to take Benjamin saying: “*If harm should encounter him on the path that you are to walk, you will bring down my grey hair in sorrow to Sheol*”.

For the phrase וְקִרְאֵהוּ אִסוֹן ‘*If harm should encounter him*’, the MT has a conditional clause that is understood as such from context. The two weQatals in 42:38 form what would be an awkward paratactic structure in English, but this type of conditional is attested elsewhere in Hebrew.<sup>36</sup> In any case, given the long and dangerous journey to Egypt, harm or sickness was a real possibility and would plausibly result in Benjamin’s death, to which Jacob says: וְהוֹרַדְתֶּם אֶת שִׁיבְתִי בִיגוֹן שְׂאוּלָה ‘*you will bring down my grey hair in sorrow to Sheol*’.<sup>37</sup> This is a euphemism for Jacob’s potential death as the result of losing Benjamin. It also a poetic phrase that, like the use of Sheol in 37:35, heightens the drama and infuses the narrative with the appropriate pathos.

This occurrence of Sheol appears to intimate that it is possible for one to descend into Sheol in peace after a long life well lived. Indeed, all four Genesis occurrences of Sheol, along with 1 Kgs 2:6 and perhaps also Job 21:13, are the only examples of Sheol where this seems to be a possibility. According to Wright (2003: 89-90), there is no reason to suppose that at the end of a good life his family members would not have expected him to be anywhere other than Sheol. Hamilton (1995: 536-37), on the other hand, sees it as proper to infer that Sheol is the destiny of the wicked, with these occurrences in Genesis being the rare exception.<sup>38</sup> Von Rad (1972: 384) reads Jacob’s statement

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<sup>36</sup> Tjen (2010: 100); see also GK §159g.

<sup>37</sup> Every occurrence of Sheol in Genesis has the locative ה, and each occurrence is translated as ‘Hades’ in the LXX. However, in the MT, Gen. 42:38 is the only occurrence with a full spelling of Sheol with ו (שְׂאוּלָה). Every other occurrence in Genesis has the defective spelling.

<sup>38</sup> Hamilton follows Heidel (1949: 186) who, while admitting that Jacob’s mention of Sheol in Gen. 37:35 and 42:38 seems to denote a condition of death, states that “there is no passage which proves that She’ol was ever employed as a designation for the gathering-place of the departed spirits of the godly”.

containing Sheol as one intentionally injected with pathos but also that Sheol is here a poetic term in light of what he understands was the accepted norm of joining the dead in the family grave. Von Rad also notes that to die in such sorrow, as Jacob fully expects, meant that the dead would find no rest. This is a peculiar statement when no such details are present in the text of Genesis, and von Rad does not indicate where he derives this idea from.

Jacob's saying here echoes Gen. 37:35.<sup>39</sup> Westermann (1982: 114) notes the link between these two verses indicating Jacob's special love for the sons of his beloved wife Rachel. In 37:35, it is implied that Jacob intends to descend into Sheol in a state of mourning and continue in his grief, which has been interpreted to connote an expectation about Sheol that one continues there in the state that one dies.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, there is no indication given in the text to imply that Jacob's reunion with Joseph in the underworld would be an expected relief for him, but only that he will join him there continuing in his grief. In 42:38, however, Jacob's euphemistic statement places the responsibility of his suffering and sorrowful descent into Sheol on the brothers but this time at the potential loss of Benjamin. With that being said, given that the account of Jacob's actual death does not mention Sheol, it may be said that the potential for profound sorrow upon losing Benjamin, and the existing sorrow of having lost Joseph, is what accounts for the mention of Sheol both here and at 37:35.<sup>41</sup>

### 2.1.3. Gen. 44:29

*If you take this one also from before me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my grey hair with evil to Sheol.*

The final two occurrences of Sheol in Gen. 44 are part of Judah's speech (verses 18-34), which is the

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<sup>39</sup> Wenham (2000: 411).

<sup>40</sup> Levenson (2006: 77).

<sup>41</sup> Gunkel (1997: 394).

longest speech in the entire book.<sup>42</sup> Like the previous two occurrences, the mention of Sheol in this context intensifies the language and conveys the severity of the outcome, being Jacob's death of a broken heart if Benjamin is to be taken as a slave and not return with his brothers.

The verb לָקַח in 29a is significant. In various contexts לָקַח refers to the taking of life (cf. 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Ps. 31:14; Prov. 1:19; Jon. 4:3).<sup>43</sup> Here, לָקַח refers to Jacob being deprived of Benjamin (cf. 2 Kgs 2:3, 5),<sup>44</sup> but also Joseph and Simeon. He accuses the brothers of taking Benjamin *also* (גַּם), which may imply that Jacob sees the brothers as being in some way responsible for the loss of Joseph. Given that Jacob believes Joseph to be dead (42:38), to *take* Benjamin implies his inevitable death.

For the phrase, וְקָרְהוּ אֹסוֹן 'And harm happens to him', קָרְהוּ is used in place of קָרָא, as we have it in 42:38 (וְקָרְאֵהוּ אֹסוֹן). The reason for this is difficult to determine, but this variant has little bearing on what the text intends to convey regarding the potential risk to Benjamin's life.

The noun אֹסוֹן 'harm'<sup>45</sup> occurs five times in the HB (Gen. 42:4, 28, 44:29; Ex. 21:22-23). Wenham (2000: 405) interprets this as an "accident" in light of Ex. 21:22-23. However, 'harm' makes adequate sense in both contexts. In both the Genesis and Exodus passages above, the harm that may come to Benjamin and the harm that may come to the unborn children of a pregnant woman being struck is intended to be understood as potentially fatal. In Genesis, the potential fatality is made clear in Jacob's expectation and that the loss would bring his grey hair down to Sheol in evil (בְּרַעַה שְׂאֵלָה).<sup>46</sup> In other words, he would die in grief. For אֹסוֹן in Exodus, the potential fatality is made clear in 22:23 with the stipulation that, should the unborn children die, one is to pay 'life for life' (נַפְשׁ תַּחַת נַפְשׁ).

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<sup>42</sup> Sarna (1989: 306).

<sup>43</sup> In Gen. 5:24, Enoch is *taken* (לָקַח) by God. It is not clear that this means Enoch has died. The LXX seems to avoid any connotation of death and renders the phrase as ὅτι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός 'for God transported him'. Alternatively, this phrase may reflect a notion of heavenly ascent.

<sup>44</sup> Els (NIDOTTE, 2: 813).

<sup>45</sup> BDB: 62; HALOT: 73.

<sup>46</sup> LXX: μετὰ λύπης εἰς ᾗδου 'with sorrow to Hades' (see note in 44:31 below).

#### 2.1.4. Gen. 44:31

*It will happen when he sees that the boy is not with us that he will die, and your servants will bring down the grey hair of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol.*

The special attachment between Jacob and Benjamin, as the second son born of Rachel, is described by Judah in verses 27-30 and is underscored in the phrase: *וּנְפֹשׁוֹ קִשְׁוֹרָה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ* ‘and his soul is bound up with his soul’.<sup>47</sup>

Judah’s certainty that Jacob will die (*וַיָּמָת* ‘he will die’) with the loss of Benjamin parallels Sheol in 31b. Verse 31 reiterates what is said in verse 22, although *וַיָּמָת* in 22b is somewhat ambiguous and may refer to Benjamin. However, given verse 31, it likely refers to Jacob’s prospective death.<sup>48</sup> While verse 31b reiterates the essentials of the apodosis of the conditional clause that first occurs in 42:38b, 44:31 is now a predictive conditional clause; 31b is a statement of what will now surely happen when Judah returns without Benjamin.

In verse 29, Jacob’s descent into Sheol is described as going down ‘*In/with evil (בְּרָעָה) to Sheol*’. Here, however, Judah correctly repeats Jacob’s original saying in 42:38 – ‘*In/with sorrow (בִּיגוֹן) to Sheol*’. The LXX is reversed and has the same phrase of ‘*with sorrow to Hades*’ (μετὰ λύπης εἰς ᾗδου) in 42:38b and 44:31b, and then a closely related phrase ‘*with grief to Hades*’ (μετ’ ὀδύνης εἰς ᾗδου) in 44:29. In her commentary on the LXX of Genesis, Brayford (2007: 430) does not seem to notice this but instead sees Judah as faithfully quoting his father.

The three occurrences of Sheol in 42:38 and 44:29 and 31 are repetitions of the same saying in

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. 18:1.

<sup>48</sup> Sarna (1989: 307).

different contexts and with only slight variations in the text. The LXX translates each example as Hades, but this occasions no surprise given the narrative context and the implication of Jacob's death potentially occurring while in a state of grief.

Overall, for these four occurrences of Sheol in Genesis, the name may refer to the underworld for both the righteous and wicked alike, but this is not the most obvious feature. Rather, Sheol, with its negative associations in other texts, is in Genesis a poetic feature employed for the purpose of heightening the drama of the narrative. There is no clear mythological or ancient Near Eastern provenance behind these occurrences. Furthermore, apart from the LXX and other Greek versions translating Sheol as Hades in these chapters, there are no other details relating to the Greek underworld. In light of the above, and given the actual death of Jacob, where Sheol is noticeably absent, each occurrence merely names the grave or place of descent after death as Sheol without providing any further details that might explicate its actual nature.

## 2.2. NUMBERS

### 2.2.1. Num. 16:30

*And if the Lord creates a creation, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them, along with everything that belongs to them, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have spurned the Lord.*

The nature and significance of Sheol in Num. 16 is specially connected to the extraordinary demise of the rebels of Dathan, Abiram and Korah.<sup>49</sup> This occurrence of Sheol is also unique, as it is the only

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<sup>49</sup> Both occurrences of Sheol in Num. 16 are defective spellings in pausal form with the locative ך.

example from a narrative context where Sheol is not spoken of in figurative terms but as part of an event that happened in reality. The underworld, however, appears to be of secondary importance in the passage, where the emphasis is rather placed on the **בריאה**, or newly created and supernatural orifice that swallows the rebels alive with all of their families and possessions. In other words, Sheol appears as an accepted preexisting part of the cosmos and created order, whereas the **בריאה** is unprecedented. Importantly, this passage has also been read as a personification of Sheol, where **ארץ**, **ארמה** and Sheol are part of the same voracious monster, which suggests a possible connection with the Ugaritic Mot. This will be discussed further below.

The initial phrase in 30a – **וְאִם־בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא יְהוָה** – ‘*But if the Lord creates a creation*’ – is an idiomatic phrase and connotes something unfamiliar or previously unwitnessed. This is especially clear in light of verse 29: **אִם־כְּמוֹת כָּל־הָאָדָם יָמוּתוּן אֱלֹהִים** ‘*if these die like the death of all humankind...*’, which itself refers to the natural, expected end of all humankind and mortal creatures.<sup>50</sup>

The noun **בריאה** ‘*a creation*’ is a hapax. It is derived from the creation verb **ברא**, which is used in the HB exclusively to refer to divine creation.<sup>51</sup> Here, however, the connection of **ברא** with an act of divine punishment is unique.<sup>52</sup> It has been argued by some scholars that the preceding qal of **ברא** may also be interpreted as “cut” in harmony with the splitting of the earth (**בִּקְעַ**) in 31b. The opening phrase in 30a – **וְאִם־בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא יְהוָה** – may then be read as “but if the Lord makes a great chasm”.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Gray (1903: 206-207), commenting on verse 29 and the contrast between descending alive into Sheol or dying a natural death, cites Ps. 55:24 and stated that there the phrase “in the midst of their days” supports an understanding that the demise of the rebels in Num. 16 is the “special fate of sinners”.

<sup>51</sup> HALOT: 153.

<sup>52</sup> TDOT (2: 246, 248). See also, Ex. 34:10. There, previously unwitnessed and marvellous creations are foretold, but with a positive force.

<sup>53</sup> Van Leeuwen (NIDOTTE, 1: 731-32). Milgrom (1990: 137) prefers this rendering stating that this is corroborated by the order of events, which are fulfilled almost exactly from 31b to 33, but especially in light of **בִּקְעַ** in 31b. Also, Hanson (1972: 23-24). Hanson’s overall argument is that, while divine creation may have become the meaning in later usage, the primary meaning of **ברא** is “to fashion, to form by cutting”, and should be translated as such wherever it occurs in both qal and piel unless the context suggests otherwise. He bases this

However, this detracts from the force of the idiom, especially in light of verse 29, which strongly suggests that the intent of the author is that the rebel's death should be unusual and unprecedented for the purpose of underscoring the divine endorsement of Moses' leadership and authority.<sup>54</sup>

The LXX appears to support the understanding of the **בְּרֵאשִׁית** as something new and conveys the contrast between natural death and the unnatural death by calling it a **φάσμα** “unusual vision” (NETS) – **ἀλλ’ ἢ ἐν φάσματι δείξει κύριος** ‘*But if the Lord shows by way of an unusual vision*’.<sup>55</sup> In this way, the translators appear to have understood that the chasm or mouth was specifically a visible manifestation of something unnatural and unprecedented.

Regarding the phrase **וּפְצְתָהּ אֶת־פִּיהָ הָאֲדָמָה** ‘*and the ground opens its mouth*’ in 30b, Levine (1993: 417) states that **פָּצַח** is a specialized verb that always takes **פֶּה** as its object. This is certainly true of all its biblical occurrences with the exceptions of Ps. 144:7, 10, 11,<sup>56</sup> where **פָּצַח** refers to deliverance for the psalmist from foreigners and the sword. Furthermore, it is only in Gen. 4:11, Num. 16:30, and Deut. 11:6 (a direct reference to Num. 16:30-33) that **פָּצַח** refers to the earth opening its mouth to consume either Abel's blood or the rebels in Num. 16. In Gen. 4:11, it is **הָאֲדָמָה** ‘*the ground*’ that opens its mouth. In Deut. 11:6 it is **אֶרֶץ**. However, both **אֲדָמָה** and **אֶרֶץ** occur twice in Num. 16: **אֲדָמָה** in 30b and 31b and **אֶרֶץ** in 32a and 33b. In each case, the LXX translates as: **ἡ γῆ** ‘*the land/ground/earth*’.

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argument on the Arabic cognate *barāʾ*, as well as the piel use of the root (cf. Josh. 17:15, 18; Ezek. 16:40, 23:47).

<sup>54</sup> Leveen (2002: 253). Noth (1968: 128) also notes that **בְּרֵאשִׁית**, the word “specially reserved” for the creative acts of God, is what marks their demise as significant and unnatural, which in turn legitimizes Moses' authority.

<sup>55</sup> Muraoka (711): “unusual vision”; L&S (1919): “apparition, phantom; vision”. **φάσμα** is used only twice more in the LXX: Isa. 28:7 – **ἐπλανήθησαν τοῦτ’ ἔστι φάσμα** ‘*they stumbled. This is a delusion*’, and Job 20:8 – **φάσμα νυκτερινόν** ‘*nocturnal vision*’. Cf. also Wis. 17:4.

<sup>56</sup> BDB: 822.

In 30c we have the phrase **וּבִלְעָה אֹתָם** ‘*and swallows them up*’. **בִּלַּע** is the most common term for swallowing in the HB, and the root is attested in Arabic (*bali’a*) and Aramaic/Syriac (*b<sup>e</sup>la’*).<sup>57</sup> In the context of Sheol, the mythological provenance of the insatiable Mot is a relatable theme.<sup>58</sup> However, it may be overstated here when we take into account the recorded deaths of the wilderness generation throughout chapters 11 to 25. Leveen (2008: 145-47) has noted the frequent theme of consuming, often expressed by way of **אָכַל**. This is especially significant in relation to the reports of divine punishment throughout these chapters, which usually comes in the form of a consuming fire (cf. verse 35).<sup>59</sup> This is first seen at 11:1, and following in 11:4 the people complain of hunger and remember their days of plenty in Egypt. The punishment of the rebels in chapter 16 then being consumed by the swallowing earth and the divine fire is perhaps an ironic reversal of the consuming theme.

It is also notable that verses 30d, 32b and 33a place great emphasis on the fact that along with the people, all their possessions went down to Sheol as well:

**30d** וְאֵת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם

*‘along with everything that belonged to them’*

**32b** וְאֵת־בְּתוּיָהֶם וְאֵת כָּל־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר לְקָרַח וְאֵת כָּל־הָרִכּוּשׁ

*‘and with their households, and with everyone who belonged to Korah, and all their possessions’*

**33a** וַיִּרְדּוּ הֵם וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם

*‘And they went down, and everything that belonged to them’*

<sup>57</sup> Els (NIDOTTE, 1: 665).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Ex. 15:12; Isa. 5:14, 25:8; Jon. 2:1; Hab. 2:5; Ps. 124:3; Prov. 1:12.

<sup>59</sup> It is notable that **בִּלַּע** is often used to denote the punitive measures either of YHWH, either predicted, enacted or hoped for (TDOT, 2: 139). Cf. for example, Ex. 15:12; Num. 16:30, 32, 34, 26:10; Deut. 11:6; Isa. 19:3; Lam. 2:2, 5, 8; Ps. 21:10, 55:10 106:17.

This detail is also later picked up in the reference to the rebellion and their destruction in Deut. 11:6, where their households (בתיהם), their tents (אהליהם), and every living thing that followed after them (כל־היקום אשר ברגליהם) are listed as having been swallowed by the earth (ארץ). Total and complete annihilation is the intended meaning here.

A comparable swallowing passage is found in Prov. 1:12. The passage is a possible allusion to the fate of the rebels in Num. 16, as both passages mention a) the swallowing of victims, b) descending alive into Sheol, and c) the completeness of their annihilation. In Prov. 1:12, the son is warned not to consent to sinners who entice (verse 10), for they aspire to be ‘*like Sheol*’ and to swallow (בלע) their victims ‘*alive and whole (חיים ותמימים), like those who go down to the pit*’ (כיוורדי בור). In this way, the appended phrase, יורדי בור, which is synonymous with a descent into Sheol, may itself have been derived from the incident in Num. 16.<sup>60</sup>

On descending alive into Sheol, Budd (1984: 188) suggests that the rebels sense a deprecation, and suffer in the underworld in a way that the dead do not. While such details regarding the underworld experience of different groups or individuals, as opposed to the dead in general, are not given in the text, descending alive into Sheol certainly suggests a fate reserved for wicked individuals.<sup>61</sup>

In 30e, the phrase וידעתם ‘*then you shall know*’, reinforces the idea that Moses’ authority will only be understood as divinely endorsed if some kind of previously unknown and unwitnessed event occurs by which the rebels are destroyed. This links with verse 29, where natural death is the intended contrast.

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<sup>60</sup> See also the analyzes at 6.1.1. and 8.1. (ii).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Ps. 55:16, 124:3; Prov. 1:12.

### 2.2.2. Num. 16:33

*So they went down, they and all that belonged to them, alive into Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.*

From 31b to 33a we have the exact fulfilment of verse 30 with all the constituent details of the terms laid out by Moses: The earth splits open (31b: *וַתִּבְקַע הָאֲדָמָה*) and the rebels descend alive into Sheol with all of their family members and possessions (32b).<sup>62</sup>

First, there are two aspects to the demise of Dathan, Abiram and Korah: a) the swallowing earth and b) the consuming fire in verse 35 that destroys the 250 men of their company offering incense. Levine (1993: 417) sees this as a *P* addition to *JE*, as well as a contradiction to what has just occurred in verses 25 to 34. Levine does not explain how this is a contradiction, but it seems clear from verses 23 to 27 that the object of the earth's swallowing includes the rebels as well as their dwellings. In verse 24 Moses is instructed to get away from their dwellings, and in verse 26 he instructs the rest of the congregation to refrain from even touching anything that belongs to them lest they are swept away with them. Presumably, the dwellings are in a separate location to the tent of meeting where the men are offering incense, and therefore, the consuming fire need not be viewed as a separate punishment haphazardly tacked on to the text. Furthermore, two of the other three biblical references to the destruction of the rebels, Num. 26:10 and Ps. 106:17-18, mention the consuming fire along with the swallowing earth as part of the same event.

There is also a noticeable connection between the swallowing earth in Num. 16 and the demise of the Egyptians in Ex. 15:12, especially in the phrase *וַתִּכַּסּ עֲלֵיהֶם הָאֲדָמָה* 'and the earth closed over them'.<sup>63</sup> The swallowing and covering verbs *כָּסָה* and *בָּלַע* are found in both passages. As in 33b, the

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<sup>62</sup> Milgrom (1990: 137).

<sup>63</sup> Tromp (1969: 23-27); Johnston (2002: 108); Levenson (2006: 40-41).

piel of כָּסָה is used three times in Ex 14:28, 15:5, 15:10 to describe the waters that ‘covered’ or ‘closed over’ the Egyptians. Additionally, in the context of Egypt’s descent into Sheol in Ezek. 31:15, God closes the deep over the great cedar (כִּסְתִי עָלָיו אֶת הַהַיָּוִם). While there may be an underworld allusion in Ex. 15, Sheol is not mentioned. Levenson (2006: 40-41) suggests that this may add some weight to viewing אֶרֶץ as a Sheol synonym.<sup>64</sup> Johnston (2002: 108), however, notes that the hymn in Ex. 15 frequently mentions the water in which the Egyptians drown (verses 1, 4, 5, 8, 10) and that the allusion to the underworld is secondary to the description of death. The images of being swallowed by אֶרֶץ and drowning, Johnston notes, “are complementary rather than identical”. Along with the absence of Sheol in Ex. 15, the other major distinction between the two passages is that the event in Num. 16 is intended to be understood as unique and unprecedented.

In 33c, we are told that the rebels perished (וַיִּאֲבָדוּ). The basic sense of the root אָבַד commonly indicates a perishing in relation to death (cf. Job 4:20; Ps. 146:4; Eccl. 9:6), which other Semitic cognates similarly express.<sup>65</sup> אָבַד may also express perishing in the sense of annihilation and vanishing from the land and memory (cf. Deut. 4:26, 11:17; Isa. 26:14). In the context of Sheol, אָבַד readily recalls the connection between Sheol and Abaddon (cf. Job 26:6; Prov. 15:11, 27:20), but here the verb does not necessarily allude to the underworld independently. It may, however, add to the general character of Sheol in connection with death and perishing.

Finally, in spite of the elements of swallowing, and the connection with the underworld that would seem to suggest an obvious connection to Mot, the Canaanite mythology does not play a major role in this context. Rather, the בְּרִיאָה is a new and unprecedented creation of YHWH, and not something preexisting, as we might expect a lesser god of the Canaanites to be. As Tromp (1969: 26-27) observes, the supernatural mouth is given to the earth and not to Mot, or death personified.

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<sup>64</sup> Also Tromp (1969: 25f).

<sup>65</sup> TWOT (1: 3); BDB: 1; HALOT: 2.

Moreover, the divine fire in verse 35 is likewise a consuming force, but it is none other than the fire of Israel's god. In this way, the mythological provenance of Mot is of secondary importance in this text, if the Canaanite deity is in view here at all.

Sheol in Num. 16 is already a part of the created order, and the clear separation between Sheol and the supernatural mouth created exclusively for the destruction of the rebels makes Sheol in some sense a secondary feature of this event. Here, the rebels descend alive into the underworld, where the normative descent into Sheol is natural death and burial. For the purpose of demonstrating divine endorsement of Moses' leadership, their destruction and death were meant to be something out of the ordinary, which is stated clearly in verse 29.

### **2.3. DEUTERONOMY 32:22**

*For a fire is kindled in my anger, and it burns as far as Sheol beneath, and it consumes the earth and its increase, and it sets fire to the foundations of the mountains*

Deut. 32:22 contains the only occurrence of Sheol in the book of Deuteronomy. Here, in the Song of Moses, Sheol's primary function is as the lowermost extremity in the universe, where Sheol's status as the underworld is clear. Apart from this feature, however, there are few details elucidating a broader picture of the nature of Sheol in its biblical context in this passage. The dead are not mentioned, but the inexorability of God's judgment and wrath perhaps foreshadow death. Importantly, in contrast to Hades, where the underworld deity of the same name rules the underworld, Deut. 32:22 sees YHWH as having dominion over every realm and extremity in the universe. This is further emphasized throughout the song, but especially in verse 39 where God is spoken of as having ultimate authority over life and death.

The initial phrase in 22a – כִּי־אֵשׁ קָדְחָהּ בְּאַפִּי – ‘*For a fire is kindled in my anger*’ – immediately connects this occurrence of Sheol to divine wrath and judgment. We have already seen, for instance, the connection of Sheol with the fire of divine wrath and judgment in Num. 16:35.<sup>66</sup>

22b then underscores YHWH’s authority over the underworld: וְתִקַּד עַד־שְׂאוֹל תַּחְתִּית ‘*and it burns as far as Sheol beneath*’.<sup>67</sup> Only here and at Isa. 57:9 do we find the preposition עַד attached directly to Sheol.<sup>68</sup> The addition of תַּחְתִּית describes Sheol’s function as the lower-most extremity in the universe.<sup>69</sup> However, unlike other examples where Sheol functions as the bottom tier in the cosmos (Job 11:8, Ps. 139:8, Isa. 7:11 and Am. 9:2), there is no obverse given for the underworld. The point here, and at Isa. 57:9, is rather that Sheol is a remote place and implicitly that there is no escaping God’s wrath, as his sovereignty extends even to the underworld (cf. Job 26:6).

The phrase מוֹסְדֵי הַרִים ‘*foundations of the mountains*’ only occurs here and at Ps. 18:8.<sup>70</sup> In both instances, מוֹסְדֵי הַרִים helps to convey a multi-tiered cosmos, and both examples appear in contexts where Sheol is also mentioned. In his analysis of Ps. 18:8, Dahood (1966: 106) states that, as the ‘*foundations of the mountains*’ are set in the underworld, therefore אֲרֶץ must likewise stand for the underworld. However, Johnston (2002: 102) points out, that given the mention of the earth’s increase in 22c (וַיִּבְלָה אֲרֶץ וַיִּאֲכַל אֲרֶץ ‘*and it consumes the earth and its increase*’), which implies agriculture, אֲרֶץ cannot denote the underworld here. Rather, אֲרֶץ stands for the surface level of the earth. In other

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. also Prov. 30:16 – Sheol as ‘*a fire that never says “Enough”*’ (אֵשׁ לֹא־אָמְרָה הֵן); Job 24:19 – הֵם ‘*heat*’ snatching away sinners; and Isa. 57:1-10 – child sacrifices to Molech.

<sup>67</sup> The LXX translates Sheol as Hades, but renders burning in the future tense: καυθήσεται ἕως ᾗδου κάτω ‘*it will burn as far as Hades beneath*’.

<sup>68</sup> In Job 14:13, עַד is attached to YHWH’s anger. However, instead of connoting distance, the preposition is used to indicate a time when God’s anger has passed.

<sup>69</sup> For תַּחְתִּית see analysis of Ps. 86, note (iii).

<sup>70</sup> מוֹסְדֵי אֲרֶץ ‘*foundations of the earth*’ is more common. It occurs six times in the HB: Ps. 82:5, Prov. 8:29, Isa. 24:18, 40:21 (feminine plural), Jer. 31:37, and Mic. 6:2. In each of these examples, the construct has a cosmological function, which by association, and in light of Deut. 32:22 and Jon. 2:6, may be construed as one aspect of Sheol and the underworld.

words, the land will be burned up along with its produce and every growing thing.

Mayes (1979: 389) makes a comparison with Ps. 139:15 stating that Sheol in the Song of Moses is perhaps understood “as the ‘depths of the earth’ where man is formed”, as one returns to Sheol presumably in the same way as one returns to the earth (cf. Gen. 3:19). This interpretation, however, seems to ignore the metaphor of the womb in Ps. 139:15, which is made clear in the preceding verses (see analysis at 4.1.13.). Furthermore, only Adam is said to have his origins from the earth itself, whereas every other human being is born in the normal way.

With that being said, as one representative level in the cosmos, Sheol is still deeper according to its qualifier תחתית. Thus we might say that we have level 1 being ארץ, level 2 being מוסדי הרים, and level 3 being שאול תחתית. If then we are to think of levels in the cosmological order, as mentioned above, תחתית clearly sets Sheol below everything else.<sup>71</sup>

Sheol in Deut. 32:22 is best seen as embodying the basic concept of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean underworld, but with the primary emphasis on functioning as an extremity in the cosmos with universal implications.<sup>72</sup> In other words, Sheol may be easily construed here as bearing the same likeness to the broader concept of an underworld in as much as it fulfils that basic cosmological role.

The passage exhibits underworld phraseology that we find elsewhere, but while Sheol may be viewed as the place of the dead, given what we already know of Sheol from other passages, the dead themselves are not mentioned here. Certainly, retribution on the wayward people has death in its scope, but death and descent into the underworld is not a salient theme. Rather, Sheol functions more specifically as the lowest tier in a multi-tiered universe in the Israelite conception of the cosmos.

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<sup>71</sup> In Jon. 2:6, לקצבי הרים, ‘to the roots of the mountains’, also appears to relate to Sheol, and perhaps a sense of going deeper still beyond the bars of Sheol: ‘I went down to the land whose bars closed behind me forever’ (see analysis at 3.2.4.).

<sup>72</sup> So Johnston (2002: 80); McConville (2002: 457).

Ultimately, the message of Deut. 32:22 in relation to Sheol is that God penetrates all space, and here specifically in his anger. There is no escaping his wrath, even in the lowermost point in the cosmos, or in the grave and place of the dead (cf. Am. 9:2).<sup>73</sup>

## 2.4. SUMMARY

In the Torah passages analyzed above, Sheol is employed by the authors with several different emphases making a uniform exposition of Sheol problematic. Consistently, however, Sheol is a place where one descends and is beneath the surface of the earth. It is also roundly negative.

While Sheol in Genesis appears to function as the expected grave of the patriarchs, its negative associations inevitably infuse these passages with a certain pathos and drama. Importantly, Sheol is not mentioned in the reports of their actual deaths. For the demise of the rebels in Num. 16, Sheol is portrayed as the underworld, but as a space beneath the surface of the earth, which becomes part of the punishment on the rebels. For the comparable language used in both Num. 16:30-33 and Prov. 1:12, I have also suggested that the underworld phrase יורדי בור *'those who descend into the pit'* may also be derived from this story. This will be discussed in further detail below. Finally, in Deut. 32:22, Sheol fulfils a basic cosmological role as the lowermost tier in a multi-tiered cosmos, but most importantly Sheol is not beyond the reach of YHWH and divine judgment.

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<sup>73</sup> So Philips (1973: 218); Thompson (1974: 328).

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## SHEOL IN THE PROPHETS

### 3.1. THE FORMER PROPHETS

There are four occurrences of Sheol in the books of the Former Prophets: 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Sam. 22:6; 1 Kgs 2:6, 9. Given that 2 Sam. 22:2-51 corresponds with Ps. 18, this occurrence of Sheol will be analyzed along with Ps. 18:6 in chapter 4 (see analysis at 4.1.4.).

The first occurrence of Sheol to be examined here is 1 Sam. 2:6 in the song of Hannah, where she proclaims that YHWH has ultimate authority over life and death. The importance of this occurrence is as a possible step towards the development of resurrection according to the affirmation that YHWH ‘*brings down to Sheol and raises up* (יִיעֵל)’. This statement is comparable to Deut. 32:39b, where the same affirmation of YHWH’s power and authority is expressed.

The two occurrences of Sheol in 1 Kgs 2, however, function as part of David’s instructions to Solomon on how to punish Joab and Shimei, and given that they are to be brought down violently to Sheol, in blood and without peace, these two occurrences ostensibly support the notion that one may live a peaceful and prosperous life before death and descent into Sheol.

### 3.1.1. 1 Sam. 2:6

*The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.*<sup>74</sup>

In the context of Hannah's song in 1 Sam. 2:1-10, Sheol appears in a series of opposites praising YHWH for his graciousness and provision for the righteous who suffer when the unrighteous prosper. In direct response to God's provision of the child Samuel, her praise is made up of grand theological assertions about the nature and character of God. The overarching theme of Hannah's song is that of justice and in particular a "reversal of polarities" in this life.<sup>75</sup> Between Hannah, the 'barren' (עקרה), and her rival Peninnah, 'the one with many children' (רבת בנימ) in verse 5, God has reversed their circumstances and Hannah is now fertile, while Peninnah languishes, or is in some way forlorn.<sup>76</sup>

The emphasis on this reversal has the sovereignty and ultimate power of God in view, where YHWH is described as having supreme authority over all human flourishing and activity, life and death, prosperity and poverty. In this context, Sheol then functions as something within the purview and jurisdiction of YHWH.

Additionally, in light of the aforementioned theme of justice, 1 Sam. 2:6 may readily relate to later resurrection with wrongs being made right, as in Dan. 12:1-4. However, it would, of course, be a mistake to view the polarity here as an intentional reference to resurrection itself. The point rather is that to be raised from Sheol, or from the grave to life, is possible with YHWH, even if it is not

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<sup>74</sup> LXX: θανατοῖ καὶ ζωογονεῖ κατάγει εἰς ᾄδου καὶ ἀνάγει 'He kills and saves/preserves life; he brings down to Hades and raises up'. For 1 Sam. 2:6b, cf. Tob. 13:2c – κατάγει εἰς ᾄδην καὶ ἀνάγει 'He brings down to Hades and raises up', and Wis. 16:13b – καὶ κατάγεις εἰς πύλας ᾄδου καὶ ἀνάγεις 'and you bring down to the gates of Hades and you raise up'.

<sup>75</sup> Johnston (2002: 219).

<sup>76</sup> Miscall (1986: 15) notes the general and universal nature of Hannah's praise, but oddly, despite verse 5 and the direct correlation between the 'barren' (Hannah) and the 'one with many children' (Peninnah), states that her praise "does not include [God's] specific action on her behalf". Jobling (1998: 182-83) sees Peninnah's forlornness in relation to the text's characterization of her as the wicked one, but perhaps also in relation to Elkanah's showing of favour to Hannah. However, this is a peculiar reading when Hannah's praise directly follows God's positive answer to her prayer and vow (1:11, 27).

something that normally happens. In this way, 1 Sam. 2:6 may be taken as a seed for the notion of resurrection, or a step in that direction.

God's authority over life, death and the power of Sheol is expressed by a string of four verbs in the hiphil and piel stems. Each of these verbs are extremely common, yet their use here is actually rare:

i) God causes death or puts to death with the hiphil participle **מִמִּית**. This is the only biblical example of the hiphil participle of **מָוַת** having God as the subject.<sup>77</sup>

ii) God brings to life with the piel participle **מְחַיֶּה**. 1 Sam. 2:6 and Neh. 9:6 contain the only two occurrences of **מְחַיֶּה** in the HB where God is the subject.

iii) God brings down to Sheol with the hiphil participle **מְוֹרִיד**. 1 Sam. 2:6 and 2 Sam. 22:48 contain the only two occurrences of **מְוֹרִיד** in the HB where God is the subject.

iv) God raises up with the hiphil waw-consecutive **וַיַּעַל**. Though **עָלָה** is extremely common, it appears that only here and at Ps. 40:3 do we have the only examples of the hiphil 3ms + waw-consecutive of **עָלָה** used of God to describe an action performed by him. 1 Sam. 2:6, however, is perhaps different from Ps. 40:3 in that its use in 1 Sam. 2 functions more in a subjunctive sense, as it is not based on something that has literally happened or usually happens; that is, raising up the dead from Sheol.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, verse 8 contains the phrase **מִקִּיָּם מַעֲפֵר דָּל** 'he raises the poor from the dust'. While **עֲפָר** may function as a Sheol synonym in other contexts (cf. Job 17:16; Dan. 12:2), here,

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<sup>77</sup> There are only three other uses of the hiphil part. of **מָוַת** in the HB: cf. 2 Kgs 17:26; Jer. 26:15; Job 33:22.

<sup>78</sup> Note that Samuel himself is temporarily roused or disturbed (**רָגַז** – cf. Isa. 14:9) and brought up (**עָלָה**) from death in 1 Sam. 28:11-15. There, **עָלָה** is used a total of five times to describe Samuel's coming up (qal) and being brought up (hiphil) presumably from the underworld. In this case, Sheol is not mentioned, but Samuel is described by the necromancer as **מִן הָאָרֶץ עָלִים** 'coming up from the earth'. Other examples of the use of **עָלָה** in terms of bringing up from the underworld or grave include Ezek. 37:12, 13 (of God bringing up the people from their graves) and Jon. 2:6 (of God bringing up Jonah's life from the pit [שְׁחַת]). Cf. also Pss. 30:4, 40:3, 71:20.

דָּל ‘*poor, needy*’, along with 2:8a-b, rather indicates that עִפּוּר and its parallel אִשְׁפֵּת ‘*ash heap*’ symbolise a lowly state in life or a position of humility and poverty.<sup>79</sup> The LXX translates דָּל as πένητα, which typically refers to labourers and poor people.<sup>80</sup> In this way, we may understand the phrase in verse 8 as referring to a position of low social status, and potentially also verse 6 as figuratively referring to the exaltation of Hannah in terms of her transition from barren to fertile.

The reference to Sheol in 6b is less so a statement reflecting an event that has already happened, or something that does sometimes happen, but a theologically abstract concept underscoring the ultimate power of YHWH as the one who brings down to Sheol,<sup>81</sup> which is analogous to and parallel with גְּמוּיָה.

For defining the nature of Sheol in this passage, the context provides a series of contrasts, where YHWH is ascribed ultimate authority over life and death, prosperity and poverty. The language is emphatic: God is master of all, including the underworld, and he has the power to raise up from the underworld also. Given Sheol’s subordination to the power of YHWH, 1 Sam. 2:6 indicates that impermanence in Sheol is possible.

While it would certainly be an error to read 1 Sam. 2:6 as a calculated reference to resurrection, there should be no doubt about the theological import of such a statement concerning the authority of YHWH over life and death. Along with other such statements, either implicit or explicit in Deut. 32:39b, 2 Kgs 5:7b, Job 5:18, Hos. 6:1, Tob. 13:2 and Wis. 16:13, this statement in Hannah’s song may have contributed to notions of an afterlife or potential future-life, especially as a return to life, which is the natural and clear obverse of death and the grave. Sheol, in other words, according to 1

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<sup>79</sup> 1 Sam. 2:8a-b = Ps. 113:7-8; for 2:7, cf. Job 5:11; Ps. 75:8.

<sup>80</sup> BDAG: 795 – “to work, toil”, and elsewhere in Greek literature: “being obliged to work for a living, but not being reduced to begging” (cf. Plut. 552f). However, this does not seem to reflect its use elsewhere in the LXX. Cf. for example: Ps. 12:6 (LXX 11:6) and 112:9 (LXX 111:9).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Am. 9:2 – אֹרְרִידִם; LXX: κατὰξω.

Sam. 2:6, may have the potential for impermanence in light of the power of YHWH, which in one way negates the view that there is strictly no return Sheol.

### 3.1.2. 1 Kgs 2:6

*Now, act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not allow his grey head to go down in peace to Sheol.*

The two examples of Sheol in 1 Kgs 2, are essentially the same saying, with 2:9 being a variation of the initial saying in verse 6. Each occurrence of Sheol forms part of a command to exact punishment on two different people: Joab (2:6), one of David's military captains, and Shimei (2:9), the Benjamite who cursed David on his flight from Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam. 16:5-13). As with the occurrences in Genesis, here, it initially appears to be intimated that at death one may enter Sheol, or the grave, in peace after a life well lived and full of years.

For 6a, and the command to Solomon to act according to his own wisdom (וְעִשִׂיתָ כַּחכְמַתְךָ), Walsh (1996: 41) considers David's directive as indirect, stating that the reference to Solomon's own wisdom is "a way of signalling to Solomon" that it will be his job to decide how best to deal with Joab. However, from 6b (וְלֹא־תֹרֵד שֵׁיבְתוֹ בְּשָׁלֶם שְׂאֵל) 'but do not allow his grey head in peace to Sheol'<sup>82</sup> it is clear that David's will is for Joab to die for his crimes and specifically in a manner that is not peaceful or characterized by peace.

As in Gen. 42:38, and 44:29, 31, אֶת־שֵׁיבְתוֹ 'his grey hair' going down to Sheol is a euphemism for Jacob's death with the possible intimation that one may enter Sheol, or perhaps the grave, in peace after a long life well lived. As in Genesis, Sheol may also be added here for dramatic effect; that is,

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<sup>82</sup> The defective spelling of Sheol without the ך or locative ך is only found here and Job 17:16. In Gen. 44:29, 31 and Num. 16:30, 33, the ך is missing, but the locative is added - שְׂאֵלָה. According to Burney (1903: 16), the jussive with לֹא is rare (see GK §109, 1b).

Sheol is introduced to the narrative to inject pathos or drama to the passage. As with Jacob in Genesis, את־שיבתו likely indicates that Joab is advanced in years and that this is part of the overall euphemism for Joab's intended execution. Walsh (1996: 41) also sees the language of Sheol being one of several euphemisms: "grey head" for "old age", "down to Sheol" for "death", and "in peace" for "dying of natural causes". We might also say that, while the phrase בשלם שאל 'in peace to Sheol' may denote natural death in some form, it more specifically refers to dying in a state of peace or contentment (cf. Judg. 18:6; 1 Sam. 1:17, 20:42).<sup>83</sup> Here, however, the negative particle indicates a punishment that is fitting for Joab, as his crime was shedding blood in a time of peace and therefore he is not to be allowed to end his life in a time of peace.

### 3.1.3. 1 Kgs 2:9

*Now, therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you are a man of wisdom; you will know what you ought to do to him, but you must bring his grey head down with blood to Sheol*

As an elongated variation of 2:6, we are now focusing on the punishment intended for Shimei. Repetitions of elements from verse 6 are readily apparent, and David's command that Shimei should die violently (in blood) is a similarly fitting punishment for the individual given his curse against David in 2 Sam. 16: 8 – ויהנך ברעתך כי איש דמים אתה 'Behold! Disaster is with you, for you are a man of blood'.

Here, Solomon is told not to hold Shimei guiltless (ועתה אל־תנקהו). The piel jussive of נקה indicates that David's firm directive is for Shimei to be executed for his guilt in cursing David. This

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<sup>83</sup> BDAG: 287-88.

is the only biblical example of the piel of נקה where a human (Solomon) is the subject of the verb. Typically, נקה is used of God (cf., for example, Ex. 20:7; Num. 14:18; Job 9:28; Jer. 30:11)

The following phrase, כִּי אִישׁ חָכָם אַתָּה ‘*For you are a man of wisdom*’, echoes כַּחֲכַמְתָּךְ in verse 6. However, in light of the following phrase וַיִּדְעַת אֶת אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה לּוֹ, Solomon’s job regarding Shimei is to execute him before his time. As with Joab, אֶת־שִׁיבְתוֹ indicates that Shimei is likely already advanced in years, but he is not to be allowed to finish his life and die of old age.

As in Genesis, the phrases in 1 Kgs 2, ‘*do not allow his grey head go down in peace to Sheol* (בְּשָׁלֹם שְׂאֵל)’ and ‘*you will bring down his grey head with blood to Sheol* (בְּדָמַם שְׂאֵל)’, form two similar and related directives for Solomon to carry out the executions of Joab and Shimei. Both men are to be killed and prevented from dying peacefully in their old age.

In 2:6, the phrase ‘*in peace to Sheol*’ correlates with the nature of Joab’s crime; that is, we read in verse 5 that he retaliated in a time of peace for blood that was shed in war (דָּמֵי מִלְחָמָה) and therefore he will not die in peace, contentment, or in a time of peace in his own life. Furthermore, the danger to the dynasty for bloodguilt, which David sees as falling upon himself (verse 5), is the reason for the removal and destruction of Joab according to the principle of נֶפֶשׁ תַּחַת נֶפֶשׁ ‘*life for life*’ (Ex. 21:23-25). This is also carried out by David in 2 Sam. 21:1-9 with his handing over seven of Saul’s grandchildren for his murder of the Gibeonites (Montgomery, 1951:89).<sup>84</sup>

Like Joab’s punishment, the command for Shimei to be brought down to Sheol ‘*in blood*’ correlates with his curse against David in 2 Sam. 16: 8. As Walsh (1996: 40-44) notes, the two punishments (Joab [2:5-6] and Shimei [2:8-9]) are divided by the reward of Barzillai [2:7] thereby creating a balanced structure to the narrative. The directive to allow the sons of Barzillai to eat at

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<sup>84</sup> So also Cogan (2000: 173); Fritz (2003: 25); Gray (1977: 100-101); Hens-Piazza (2006: 25).

Solomon's table contrasts with the directives to destroy both Joab and Shimei.<sup>85</sup> In the same way that the punishments of Joab and Shimei correlate with their crimes, Barzillai's hospitality shown to David in 2 Sam. 17:27-29 is reflected in his reward, and the language used is to reflect specifically hospitality and life, as opposed to death. Additionally, the name Sheol with the attendant lexical components of '*his grey hair*', '*in peace*', and '*in blood*', is comparable with the various elements of '*his grey hair*', '*in grief*', and '*in evil*' in the Genesis occurrences. In this way, Sheol in 1 Kgs 2, as in Genesis, functions as an expressive term that bolsters the dramatic impact of the narrative.

### 3.2. THE LATTER PROPHETS

Sheol in the books of the Latter Prophets functions in a variety of ways. The ten occurrences in Isaiah are by far the most functionally diverse. Of the four independent occurrences in Hosea, Amos, Jonah and Habakkuk, Jon. 2:3b, and the psalm in chapter 2, is perhaps the nearest biblical example of a descriptive journey to the underworld. The example of Sheol in Hos. 13 is significant not only for its own figurative usage as a symbol of the mass grave of the nation but also for the intertextual links with Isa. 26. This will be discussed in further detail in chapter 8. Excluded here, for reasons that will become clear in chapter 7, are the occurrences in Ezek. 31 and 32. These will be analyzed alongside the resurrection metaphor in Ezek. 37.

#### 3.2.1. Isaiah

There are ten occurrences of Sheol in Isaiah, nine of which appear in First Isaiah, and the final in Third Isaiah (57:9). Sheol in Isaiah is highly nuanced but does not readily equate with an indiscriminate

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. 1 Kgs 18:19 (Jezebel's table); 2 Sam. 9:7, 10. Montgomery (1951: 90): "to be pensioned", citing an Egyptian pensioning system in the story of Sinuhe. Cf. Ezra 4:14 '*Now because we eat the salt of the palace*'.

underworld or place of the dead where good and bad alike ultimately reside in death. With the exception of 7:11, where Sheol abstractly denotes the greatest conceivable depth as the obverse of the greatest height, Sheol appears to function consistently as a negative place or consequence aligned with the unrighteous Judeans, the king of Babylon, illness, and idolatry.

***i) Isa. 5:14***

The occurrence of Sheol in Isa. 5:14 appears in the second of a series of woes following the ‘Vineyard Song’ (verses 1-7), and appears to serve as a secondary description in this woe-passage of what will befall Jerusalem’s social elite; that is, a descent of the city’s drunken revellers and prideful nobility into Sheol.

The composition and redaction of the passage have been widely discussed for the various difficulties presented by the ordering of the verses and possible expansions and additions to the text.<sup>86</sup> Verses 15 and 16, for example, are broadly considered to be out of place in chapter 5,<sup>87</sup> as they appear to disrupt the natural flow between verses 14 and 17.<sup>88</sup> This is largely due to the phraseological connection of verses 15 and 16 with Isa. 2:9a and 2:11a, which constitutes a strange reiteration of that material in a different context. Blenkinsopp (2000: 211) also adds the isolated woe saying in 10:1-4 to the beginning of 5:8-24 explaining that it is likely “a displaced unit of the woe-series”.<sup>89</sup> Blenkinsopp also notes that verse 14 may follow verse 12. That being said, verse 14 itself carries its own textual issues.

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<sup>86</sup> See, for instance, Blenkinsopp (2000: 211-15); Kaiser (1983, 96-109); Williamson (2006: 365-69).

<sup>87</sup> So, for example, Childs (2001: 47); Gray (1912: 92); Kaiser (1983: 108-09); Kissane (1960: 58); Wildberger (1991: 191); Williamson (2006: 366).

<sup>88</sup> Williamson (2006: 366); Moberly (2001: 65).

<sup>89</sup> Kaiser (1983: 96) and Wildberger (1991: 189-90) reverse this order: 5:8-24 + 10:1-4.

First, it has been suggested that verse 14 was originally independent of verse 13, and may act as a separate punishment to that of exile in verse 13.<sup>90</sup> This is due to the unusual repetition of לִכְן for consecutive verses,<sup>91</sup> but also for the sequence of third person feminine singular suffixes in 14b (הִדְרָה וְהַמּוֹנָה וְשִׂאוֹנָה) for which there appears to be no antecedent in the immediate context.<sup>92</sup>

The initial feminine singular suffixes in 14a, however, clearly refer to Sheol (הַרְחִיבָה and נִפְשָׁה). Wildberger (1991: 204) considers this description of Sheol to be a reflection of the author's belief that Sheol is a very real creature. However, while the underworld stretching wide its throat or gullet to greedily consume its victims resembles the familiar imagery from Canaanite mythology,<sup>93</sup> the function of Sheol here is more likely figurative. It is a metaphor for the destruction of Jerusalem's prideful and wicked inhabitants. Moreover, no other biblical passage depicts Sheol itself as an actual creature that resides in the known world. Wildberger's interpretation of Sheol may find some support from Num. 16:30-33, but, as we have seen, there it is the earth (הָאֲדָמָה) that does the swallowing of the rebels and not Sheol itself. Sheol is not part of the newness of the בְּרִיאָה, but something known to the Israelites at the time of the incident. The occurrence in Hab. 2:5 also bears a resemblance here, but the expression there likely describes a Chaldean or Babylonian king (see 3.2.5. below). Furthermore, the phrase לִבְלִי־חֶק פִּיהָ וּפְעֵרָה פִּיהָ 'and has opened wide its mouth without measure' relates more readily to the theme of the insatiability of death and Sheol, as we find in Prov. 27:20, 30:15-16, for example.

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<sup>90</sup> Williamson (2006: 366).

<sup>91</sup> Emerton (1967: 136).

<sup>92</sup> Williamson (2006: 366). It should be noted that while the consecutive use of לִכְן may be unusual here for reasons of content, the repetition in itself need not be surprising, and it is certainly not unique to this passage. Cf. for example: Isa. 30:12-13, 18, 52:6; Jer. 11:21-22; Ezek. 5:7-8, 5:10-11, 11:16-17, 13:8, 22:19.

<sup>93</sup> To translate נִפְשָׁה as 'throat/gullet' in 5:14 (HALOT: 711; DCH: 724-25) is the preferable rendering according to the context, especially in light of the Ugaritic and Akkadian cognates *npš* and *napištu/m* (Williamson, 2006: 360). Cf. the use of נִפְשָׁה in Num. 11:6; Isa. 29:8, 58:11; Jon. 2:6; Hab. 2:5. The LXX translates נִפְשָׁה in 5:14 with the usual ψυχή.

Regarding the aforementioned feminine singular suffixes in 14b, it has been suggested by both Blenkinsopp and Moberly that they are to be referred to Sheol. Blenkinsopp (2000: 210-11) reasons that there is no mention of Jerusalem, and thus Sheol, being feminine, is the object of the suffixes. Moberly (2001: 65) views the nouns הַרְרָה, הַמְנוֹן and שְׂאוֹן as referring to different categories of people who, owing to their corrupt nature, already belong to Sheol. Both scholars, however, acknowledge the hermeneutical problem arising from the final phrase וְעִלּוּ בָּהּ.<sup>94</sup>

This highly problematic final phrase, וְעִלּוּ בָּהּ, has drawn a great deal of attention, and a number of insightful emendations and readings have been proposed.<sup>95</sup> However, if the phrase is read as it stands in the MT, without recourse to any emendations, this final feminine suffix in 14b should be referred to the city. As with the preceding nouns bearing feminine suffixes, this is inferred from the wider context (5:3) and sequentially this makes the most sense. The masculine singular component of וְעִלּוּ, though problematic following the collective nouns, might be understood pronominally as a generic ‘*anyone*’, meaning anyone else who participates in the debauchery and drunken revelry. This may also be applied to וַיִּרְדּוּ, which, though it is also masculine singular, is routinely rendered as plural referring to the same collective as the nouns. Additionally, if עִלּוּ is taken as a qatil verbal adjective (JM §50b), a hapax form of עִלּוּ, 14b might be rendered ‘*her splendour and her multitude, and her revellers will go down, and anyone exulting in her*’.

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<sup>94</sup> The LXX omits this phrase, and while difficult, it seems unlikely that the LXX reflects a different *Vorlage*, where a mysterious phrase was then later added to 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> (though the ו is missing), 4QpIsa<sup>b</sup> (though וְעִלּוּ בָּהּ – see discussion in Williamson, 2006: 361n), and the MT.

<sup>95</sup> Emerton’s proposal of וְעִלּוּ לְבָהּ ‘*and the strength of her heart*’, though it has not gained acceptance, is an attempt at continuing the string of collective abstract nouns (Emerton, 1967: 142). In light of the more common form of עִלּוּ (cf. Isa. 13:3, 22:2, 23:7, 24:8; Zeph. 2:15, 3:11), Williamson has proposed the attractive solution of וְעִלּוּ בָּהּ ‘*even those who exult in her*’, which supplies the expected plural. See his thorough discussion of the problem in Williamson, 2006: 361.

Whether or not this is the correct reading and understanding of the phrase, it does fit the context without having to emend the text. The punishments of verse 13 and 14 are prophesied due to the hubris and sinfulness of the people in verse 12. The awkwardness of the phrase notwithstanding, **ויעלו בה** thus ties the punishment of verse 14 with verse 12. There, the mention of musical instruments and wine, symbols of prosperity and affluence (cf. 14:11 – **המית נבל־יך** – ‘*the music of your harps*’), along with their failure to acknowledge the deeds of YHWH, constitutes a description of what condemns the revellers in verse 14. In other words, anyone who exults in Jerusalem, yet fails to acknowledge YHWH, will be destroyed and figuratively descend into Sheol, or literally into death and the grave. In this way, **ויעלו בה** perhaps metonymically refers to the sin of prideful self-sufficiency being a kind of idolatry of the people.

Finally, while the redactional activity resulting in the peculiar composition of the chapter in its present form causes some difficulty, verse 14 neatly follows verse 12 in light of the above. The drunken revellers and social elite of Jerusalem exult in the power, majesty and affluence of the city without acknowledging the deeds of YHWH. Whether Sheol in 5:14 is, in fact, a real place in the cosmos, the supernatural world of the departed spirits, or an actual living creature is not clear. What is clear, however, is that Sheol’s role is as the negative consequence of the people’s folly. Exile is seemingly also part of that consequence, as we read in verse 13, but with the noted distinction indicated by the awkward consecutive use of **לכֶן**, it seems that exile and destruction in Sheol are separate punishments. Alternatively, it may be said that verse 14 constitutes a poetic description of exile as a complementary expansion of verse 13. It has been noted that verse 17 naturally flows on from verse 14,<sup>96</sup> and there we read of nomads and animals grazing among the ‘*ruins of the rich*’. With the city emptied and left in ruins, exile is surely part of the vision here. In this way, national or collective death in 5:14 might be construed here as equating with exile, whereas Sheol, in nationalistic terms, symbolises the place of

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<sup>96</sup> So for example, Kaiser (1983: 97); Moberly (2001: 65); Wildberger (1991: 195); Williamson (2006: 366; 1998: 14).

exile. While there is no direct connection with resurrection here, the above metaphor, along with Ezek. 37:1-14 and Isa. 26:19, may be brought to bear on the wider picture of death and the afterlife, or resurrection, in the HB.

## **ii) Isa. 7:11**

The occurrence of Sheol in Isa. 7:11 is perhaps the best example of an atypical use of the term,<sup>97</sup> and the most obvious example of Sheol functioning as an extreme locale in the cosmos. While the context indicates that we must read *Sheol* here, its function excludes the characteristic woes and gloominess of the underworld. Rather, Sheol is employed by the author specifically for its essential characteristic of depth. As discussed above, Sheol is frequently described as a place where one descends.<sup>98</sup> With this feature in mind, שְׂאֵלָה in Isa. 7:11 functions as the obverse of the adverb מֵעֵלָה (with a prefixed לְ), which here appears to be used as a substantive to denote a great height.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, this use of Sheol in the dichotomization of high and low, a feature also present in Am. 9:2, Ps 139:8, Prov. 15:24, and Job 11:8, is exceptional in the case of Isa. 7:11, as the usage here appears to be strictly conceptual. This is supported by the LXX rendering as βάθος ‘*a depth*’, which might further support an alternative view of Sheol as a multivalent term with poetic pliability and the potential for abstraction.

Through the prophet, God instructs Ahaz to ask for a sign making it ‘*as deep as שְׂאֵלָה or as high as לְמַעְלָה*’. The two most notable features of Sheol’s appearance in this passage are a) the unusual

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<sup>97</sup> Conrad (1991: 38-9) compares the Ahaz narrative in chapter 7 with the Hezekiah narrative in chapters 36-39 and lists six points of comparison in these chapters. However, Conrad’s fifth point comparing Isa. 7:10-16 and 37:30-32, where both kings are offered a sign, does not shed light on the function of Sheol in chapter 7.

<sup>98</sup> The root ירד is used to describe descent into Sheol twenty-seven times: Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Num. 16:30, 33; 1 Sam. 2:6; 1 Kgs 2:6, 9; Isa. 5:14; 14:11, 15; 38:18; Ezek. 31:15-17; 32:21, 27; Am. 9:2; Pss. 30:3/4; 55:15/16; 88:3-4/4-5; Job 7:9; 17:16; Prov. 1:12; 5:5; 7:27. In Job 21:13, the descent verb is נָהַת, which also occurs in parallel with ירד at Job 17:16.

<sup>99</sup> JM, §102d.

pointing in the MT (if indeed שאלה is here a true occurrence of Sheol),<sup>100</sup> which is only attested here in Isa. 7:11, and b) its function not as the grave or the place of the dead but as a common noun denoting a great depth, which is set in contrast to a great height. The LXX also reflects this understanding: εἰς βάθος ἢ εἰς ὕψος ‘to a depth or to a height’.<sup>101</sup> In this way, the manner of Sheol’s function here is clearly abstract or figurative. Furthermore, given that מעלה is the corresponding substantive in lieu of שמים, which is what we might otherwise expect as its obverse (cf. Am. 9:2; Ps. 139:8; Job 11:8), it is conceptually and contextually more sensible to read Sheol with the locative, albeit abstractly for its inherent relationship with all that is downwards, deep, or beneath.<sup>102</sup>

Hays (2011: 280) understands the offer of a sign as being *from* Sheol, and therefore its presence here as “a subtle polemic against necromancy” when reading in the light of the greater context of chapter 8, specifically 8:16-20. However, this understanding of the sign as coming from Sheol seems mistaken. If the sign is, or might be, *from* Sheol, then according to the context, the sign is also, or might also be, *from* the great height, and Hays neglects to comment. It is difficult to avoid the obvious dualism in the verse, and to say that the sign is from Sheol creates an unnecessary exegetical hurdle.

The opposing extremities of שאלה and מעלה denote, abstractly, the limitless power of God and the infinite scope of Ahaz’s opportunity for a sign. In order to make sense of the dualism then, one must account for a deeper theological meaning behind מעלה comparable to that of שאלה, if indeed

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<sup>100</sup> It is, of course, possible to read שאלה as the imperative of שאל, as in the AV. However, I am reading שאלה in parallel with הגבה למעלה, and I understand שאלה in this passage as a true occurrence of *Sheol*. See the analysis below.

<sup>101</sup> Aquila, Symm., and Theod. have εἰς ἀδην ‘to Hades’. These later versions may presume an original textual reading as שאלה (Wildberger, 1991: 285).

<sup>102</sup> Prov. 15:24, also contains both Sheol and מעלה. However, the obverse of מעלה, in this case, is מטח, and not Sheol, even though מטח is still used there to describe the location of Sheol. See also Deut. 28:43. There, מעלה is juxtaposed with מטח to convey the same contrast, and the pausal forms of both terms are used emphatically following their normal forms to express the perpetual movement of the sojourner’s exaltation higher and higher and Israel’s degradation lower and lower due to their disobedience:

הַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ יִשְׁלַח עֲלֵיךָ מִעֲלָה מְעֲלָה וְאֵתָהּ תִּגְרַד מִטָּח מְטָח

we are to understand Sheol here as the underworld. However, with that being said, the sign is clearly *from* YHWH (מעם יהוה אלהיך).

Reading this passage as referring to a sign *from* Sheol creates yet another problem of theological controversy. As Hays (2011: 280) notes, this “might well be understood to refer to necromancy”. He then speculates that this may have been the motivation for a pious scribe to make an executive decision to emend the usual pointing of Sheol as we would otherwise normally expect it when spelt with a directive ה. But surely this is a dubious assumption. We cannot know precisely why Sheol was pointed this way in the passage, and for this reason, it is untenable to base one’s exegesis on such a highly speculative idea. Therefore, it seems far more likely that the pointing here indicates purely the specific function of Sheol as an abstract conception of the greatest conceivable depth in contrast to the greatest conceivable height, in which case there is a conceptual agreement between the LXX and MT.

While the spelling of Sheol with the locative ה is not unusual, the pointing in the MT is not what is normally expected. Where one would normally expect a ḥolem there is a qameṣ (cf. Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Num. 16:30, 33; Ps. 9:18; Ezek. 31:15-17), which JM understands to be an intermediate pausal form for the sake of assonance with מעלה.<sup>103</sup> If indeed the MT pointing represents a pausal form, there should be no doubt that the occurrence of Sheol in Isa. 7:11 is a true occurrence of the term. Even without the MT pointing, the context precludes reading שאלה as a qal imperative of שאל ‘to ask’.<sup>104</sup> Clearly, to translate the phrase as ‘make it deep as a request’ makes little sense in the context. How then should we understand the MT pointing here?

In keeping with the theory of assonance with מעלה, the pataḥ on the normal form of מעלה, in fact, protracts to a qameṣ and is likewise in pausal form. Moreover, the parallel hiphil infinitives, העמק

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<sup>103</sup> JM §32c. Hays (2011: 280n) also notes JM’s analysis and states that if this is so, “then the ה- is directive, expressing extent”.

<sup>104</sup> According to Wildberger (1991: 285), this is how GK reads שאלה (§29u). However, GK accepts the possible reading as שאל in pause with the locative, as this forms part of his discussion on pausal forms.

and *הגבה*,<sup>105</sup> further support this understanding by highlighting the author's intended parallel and adding emphasis. In this way, *שאלה* and *מעלה* might then be viewed as superlatives. The protraction of the vowels from the expected form of *שְׁאֵלָה*, where Sheol would otherwise function as a proper name, to the exceptional pausal form, is to create a clear dichotomy between a great depth and a great height.

This occurrence of Sheol in Isa. 7:11 appears to have little to do with the grave or the notion of a post-mortem otherworldly destination for the dead souls of all humankind. It is difficult to determine in this context how the general underworld characteristics often attributed to Sheol fit with this passage. Sheol's counterpart in this verse (*מעלה*) is not the proper name of a place with terrestrial or otherworldly dimensions, but rather an abstract use of the adverb strictly intended to convey infinite possibility and the limitlessness of YHWH in the provision of a sign for Ahaz.

How then does the occurrence of Sheol in Isa. 7:11 inform or ameliorate our understanding of the ancient Israelite view of the underworld? When referring to the utmost limits of the universe, or infinite space above and below, one may presuppose that the general concept of the underworld with its cosmological role as the world below, is the most appropriate obverse of *מעלה*. However, the problem with *מעלה* is that it lacks an equivalent level of association with all that one might expect the obverse of the woes of Sheol to be. Thus, the use of *מעלה* in lieu of a more definite noun with obvious theological overtones, such as *שמים*, is an essential factor in our interpretation of Sheol in this context. In other words, *מעלה* guides our reading of Sheol here as an abstract noun denoting a location at the undermost part of the cosmos. Sheol, as it appears in the MT of Isa. 7:11 with its unique pointing, represents a free-form use of the term that poetically fulfils a dichotomous role.

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<sup>105</sup> Wildberger (1991: 285) considers *העמק*, and oddly *שאלה*, to be asyndetic imperatives. Citing JM §123r, he also states that the first, *העמק*, is given an adverbial sense, yet fails to comment on *הגבה*. He concludes that Sheol is the original textual reading, but that the textual corruption originated from dogmatic concerns.

### iii) Isa. 14:9, 11 and 15

The taunting song against the king of Babylon in Isa. 14 contains three occurrences of Sheol (verses 9, 11, and 15). Among other aspects of the passage, the taunting song is remarkable for its rather detailed and imaginative description of the underworld and the king's humiliation, death and descent thereto. Sheol, moreover, is thought to be personified in a way that borders on deification. This is brought out most clearly in verse 9, where the modern translational consensus assigns the three rousing verbs (רָגַז, עוֹרָר and קָוִים) to Sheol. The NRSV, for example, reads: *Sheol beneath is stirred up (רָגַזָה) to meet you when you come; it rouses (עוֹרָר) the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises (הִקְיִים) from their thrones all who were kings of the nations.*<sup>106</sup>

The passage also contains a number of allusions to ancient Near Eastern myths. Verses 12-15, and the figure of *hēlēl ben šaḥar*, in particular, have attracted the most attention and there have been many scholarly attempts at identifying the mythological provenance of the chapter.<sup>107</sup> Problematically, and perhaps in light of these mythological components, interpreters have tended to overstate the personification of Sheol in chapter 14, and especially in verse 9. However, a straight reading of the passage in the MT, which includes verses 22-23, shows that YHWH is the victor over Judah's Babylonian enemy, as well as the rouser of both Sheol and the Rephaim.

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<sup>106</sup> So also ESV; NIV; KJV/NKJV; ASV; DRA; RSV/NRSV; CEB; CJB; GNV; ISV; YLT; OJB; JPS.

<sup>107</sup> For example: Gallagher (1994: 131-46) identifies *hēlēl ben šaḥar* with the Sumerian god Enlil; Van Leeuwen (1980, 173-84) interprets the passage as an intentional parallel to the Epic of Gilgamesh; Heiser (2001: 354-69) in part agrees with Van Leeuwen, but sees the Isaianic author as deliberately evoking the mythic imagery from Gilgamesh XI in order to invert its storyline and create a parody on the fall of the Mesopotamian king (414); McKay (1970: 451-64) argues against a provenance from the Ugaritic material, and prefers the Greek parallels of the goddess Eos (corresponding with Hebrew שָׁהַר) and her son Phaethon (corresponding to Hebrew הִילָל), whose name at its root bears a similar meaning to the Hebrew – (Φαέθων, φαίνω) 'shine; radiant' (see L&S, 1996: 1911; BDAG: 1047); Poirier (1999: 371-89) sees the Isaianic author as drawing more or less exclusively from the Phaethon myth stating that the Greek material comes to the author of Isa. 14 "unsemitized" (372), apart from the necessary name change.

## Verse 9

The example of Sheol in verse 9 is often taken as a clear poetic personification of the underworld, with Sheol itself being stirred up and then subsequently becoming the subject who rouses the Rephaim and raises the former kings of the nations from their thrones to greet the king of Babylon upon his arrival in the underworld.<sup>108</sup> The interpretation of this verse, however, presents some difficulty depending on how Sheol's role is understood here.

First, in 9a *רָגַזְתָּ* clearly refers to Sheol. The semantic range of *רָגַז* is largely gloomy, negative or fearful,<sup>109</sup> and the root occurs three times in chapter 14: (i) in verse 3 as a noun relating to the turmoil of the people as slaves in Babylon, (ii) in verse 9 as a qal perfect feminine singular referring to Sheol being agitated or stirred up to meet the king of Babylon, and (iii) in verse 16 as a hiphil participle referring to the king of Babylon as the one who caused the earth to tremble.<sup>110</sup>

With the emphasis on agitation, disturbance, trembling and even provocation (cf. Job 12:6), it is perhaps possible that *רָגַז* in relation to Sheol obliquely connotes YHWH's wrath and judgment on the king of Babylon. If indeed Sheol acts as an agent of YHWH's wrath and judgment on the king, then Sheol being stirred up, or embittered (LXX), to meet the king makes Sheol in some way punitive. We might say that the fate of the king and his descent into Sheol is a reversal of the pain and turmoil inflicted on God's people and the fear and trembling felt by the nations in verses 3 and 16.<sup>111</sup> In what

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<sup>108</sup> So, for example: Blenkinsopp (2000: 283); Brueggemann (1998: 127); Childs (2001: 119); Clements (1980: 142); Kaiser (1974: 28); Kissane (1960: 160); Oswalt (1986: 315); Watts (2005: 258); Wildberger (1997: 61). Kaiser (1974: 28, 34-37) translates each occurrence of Sheol in chapter 14 as "Waste Land", yet he also sees the "Waste Land" as the subject of rousing the Rephaim. Watts translates 9b with Sheol as the subject: "waking ghosts because of you, all "the rams" of the earth, rousing from their thrones, all the kings of the nations". However, in his comment (263) Watts sees "the great ones of the earth" as rousing themselves.

<sup>109</sup> For example, agitation, disturbance, quaking (BDB: 919); being angry or trembling (HALOT: 1183).

<sup>110</sup> The LXX translates 9a as '*Hades beneath was embittered (ἐπικράνθη) on meeting you*' (NETS).

<sup>111</sup> For the use of *רָגַז* in reference to God's anger or agitation, or the earth and people trembling at God's wrath and anger cf. Ezek. 16:43; Job 12:6; Ps. 77:19, 18:8, 99:1; Isa. 5:25; Joel 2:1.

way then is Sheol astir? Is it Sheol itself/herself, or the underworld denizens who are stirred up? If Sheol stands for the dead collectively, is it the king's presence that stirs them, or YHWH?

As mentioned above, the subsequent verbs in verse 9 that describe rousing the Rephaim and raising them from their thrones are widely viewed as referring to Sheol. This is the case even though they are masculine singular forms, which, of course, does not agree with Sheol in gender.<sup>112</sup> Is this, in fact, an accurate reading then?

The use of the polel form is notable. It is as if after being agitated and stirred up (רָגַזָה), Sheol then rouses (עוֹרֵר) the Rephaim in the sense of controlling them and using them to mock and humiliate the king. Other polel examples of עוֹרֵר are used in terms of wielding weapons (cf. 2 Sam. 23:18; Isa. 10:26; Zech. 9:13), or stirring up and awakening love (cf. Song. 2:7). This may bolster in some sense the interpretation that sees a personification of Sheol with power over its denizens (cf. Ps. 49:15, 89:48; Hos. 13:14). Why then are these verbs masculine forms when Sheol is feminine? Importantly, the greater context of the poem ascribes the king's demise to YHWH. It seems to me that, while one might expect that the subject in the immediate context of the sentence is indeed Sheol, YHWH, who would agree with the verbs in gender, is the only other alternative subject assumed from the wider context.<sup>113</sup>

For the following verb, הִקִּים, BHS proposes an emendation of the hiphil perfect הִקִּים to the infinitive הִקִּים. This, of course, makes sense as a parallel if עוֹרֵר is read as an infinitive, which is perfectly possible (so BDB: 735; GK §145*t*). However, עוֹרֵר has the same pointing as a third masculine singular perfect, and therefore, the MT does not require the emendation.

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<sup>112</sup> The LXX does not have Hades as the subject of rousing and raising. For עוֹרֵר the LXX has *συνηγέρθησαν* 'They rose up together' (3<sup>rd</sup> plural, aorist, pass. indic.), and for הִקִּים, *ἐγείραντες* 'they have roused' (masc. pl. act. part. aorist). Does this reflect an unwillingness on the part of the translators to personify Sheol?

<sup>113</sup> Apart from the polel עוֹרֵר, there are various examples of עוֹרֵר where YHWH stirs up the spirits of others to act as tools for his judgment including, Jer. 51:1, 11; 1 Chron. 5:26, but also to do YHWH's work: Hag. 1:14; 2 Chron. 36:22; Ezek. 1:1, 5. TDOT (10: 573-74). Here, Schreiner (574) relates עוֹרֵר to 'awakening' but notes that is never used in relation to the resurrection of the dead.

If the third person masculine singular forms can be interpreted as referring to YHWH and not Sheol, then this would make sense of the third person masculine singular forms. The result would be that Sheol would not be personified in this instance. Rather, Sheol would have a collective significance referring to its denizens. For example, if Sheol could be viewed as a city or district in verse 9, we might gloss Sheol as follows: *'The city of the dead beneath is stirred up to greet you'*. To make the point clearer, if the place of the king's humiliation and death was an actual city like Jerusalem, we might read: *'Jerusalem is stirred up to greet you'*. Such a phrase would clearly indicate Jerusalem's inhabitants, without the need to see the city itself as being personified.

In accordance with the above interpretation then, YHWH is the one who rouses (עורר) and raises (הקים) the Rephaim from their thrones. This is possible in a poem or song praising YHWH for his victory over the enemy king. Sheol then is a metonym for the inhabitants of the district of the dead. How they are stirred up is implicitly YHWH as the ultimate authority behind the king's demise, but also perhaps the presence of the king upon his arrival in the underworld, which is still YHWH's doing. The verse might then read: *'Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you at your arrival. He [YHWH] has roused the Rephaim for you, all those who were leaders of the earth. He has raised them from their thrones, all the kings of the nations'*.

Further support for the above reading comes from the identification by O'Connell (1988: 407-08) of a concentric structure beginning at 4b and finishing in verse 23 rather than verse 21, which O'Connell admits is the most natural end of the poem. However, his outline of the structure views 4a and 22-23 (specifically 22b, d, and 23d with the mention of YHWH) as containing framing elements with an introduction (4a) and formulaic Yahwistic ascription (verses 22-23). However, with the mention of YHWH in verse 3, and his promise of rest from pain and turmoil (רַגַּז) inflicted by the king, verse 3 appears to connect well with 4a as part of the introduction to the taunting song. In any case, the importance of this structure is in highlighting YHWH as the protagonist pitted against the king.

## Verse 11

The opening phrase in 11a, הורר שאול גאונך המית נבליך, ‘*Your pomp has been brought down to Sheol, the music of your harps*’, carries certain details that are crucial for understanding the function of Sheol in the context of chapter 14. First, the appearance of the hophal of ירר both here and in verse 15 is notable. In relation to Sheol, the hophal only occurs here and at Ezek. 31:18. There, in a passage comparable with Isa. 14, Pharaoh is the one brought down to Sheol.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, the third masculine singular form does not have Sheol as its subject. Rather, similar to verse 9, in the context of the taunting song, the subject of הורר is YHWH, and he is the victor.

Second, גאון is often rendered as ‘*your pomp/majesty*’. Frequently, גאון conveys a negative form of pride or pomp referring to tyrants or evil men (cf. Isa. 13:11, 19, 16:6, 23:9; Job 35:12; Ps. 59:13). However, Bürki (2013: 52) cites several positive references to YHWH in Isa. 2:10, 19, 21, where גאון is used to describe YHWH in contrast to a tyrant. Here, the king’s pride and majesty is taken down in his defeat, and the implied contrast with YHWH is perhaps seen in the failure of the tyrant’s attempt at usurping God’s throne.

Third, along with the king’s pride and majesty, his merriment, and perhaps the prosperity of his kingdom, are also brought down to Sheol. This is symbolised by the phrase המית נבליך ‘*the sound of your harps*’. Some interpreters view the combination of the king’s pride and harps going down as indicating that the goodness of life has ceased.<sup>115</sup> The variant in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, however, has generated some interpretive issues. There, we have נבלתך instead of the MT’s נבליך. Watts (2005: 259) suggests that

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<sup>114</sup> Sheol is not mentioned directly in Ezek. 31:18, but described in the synonymous phrase ‘*the land below*’ (ארץ תחתית). This phrase occurs six times in Ezekiel with reference to the underworld: 26:20, 31:14, 16, 18, 32:18, 24. See 3.3.2.

<sup>115</sup> So Clements (1980: 142); Motyer (1993: 144). Oswalt (1986: 318) however, sees verse 11 as a dual depiction of the king’s funeral, where the pomp and sombre music of his funeral ceremony, on the one hand, are immediately contrasted with his rotting corpse on the other.

this could mean either “your disgrace” or “your corpse”, but prefers “your disgrace” as a parallel with גִּאֲוֹן and translates: “a groan of your disgrace”. For Blenkinsopp (2000: 283-84) ‘corpse’ is the preferred reading based on 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, and explains that הַמְּזִיחַ, as sound/music, is not appropriate in the context. The variant in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, however, sheds little light, as the MT makes reasonable sense if הַמְּזִיחַ is left as is and taken as the construct form of הַמְּזִיחָה, which is likely derived from הַמְּזִיחָה.<sup>116</sup> It is also important to note that the נַבֵּל was an instrument used in worship.<sup>117</sup> Implicitly, the king’s harps may have been used in worshipping himself. In this way, the king’s hubris and self-exaltation to the status of the Most-High, which is described in verse 13, has died with him. This suggests that the king’s pride and majesty in relation to his false divine status has also been brought down to Sheol and silenced. Death and Sheol, therefore, function here as the ultimate humiliation and proof of the king’s mortality.

For 11b, the collective nouns רִמָּה ‘maggots’ and תולעיה ‘worms’ allude clearly to decomposition in the grave. Wildberger (1997: 62) states that given the description of the king’s bed of maggots and blanket of worms, this passage demonstrates the development of Sheol as a place where retribution is carried out, and thus we see that Sheol is becoming Hell in Isa. 14 (cf. Isa. 66:24). However, Wildberger also reads 11b as describing the grave specifically but goes on to say that the HB does not pay close attention to the distinction between the grave and the underworld, noting, in particular, the use of בֹּרַי as a Sheol synonym in verses 15 and 19, along with קִבְרַי in verse 19. It should be noted that in verse 10 the Rephaim mock the king and exclaim ‘*you also have become as feeble as us!*’. In this way, death, decay and descent into Sheol, as the ultimate humiliation for one who aspired to be like the Most-High, is here also a poetic way of humanizing, or “mortal-izing”, the arrogant

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<sup>116</sup> For הַמְּזִיחַ see BDB: 242: ‘murmur, growl, roar, be boisterous’. For הַמְּזִיחָה, Johnston (NIDOTTE, 1: 1044) notes the use of הַמְּזִיחָה in reference to the sounds of musical instruments at Isa. 16:11 (כַּכְּנֹרֶה) and Jer. 48:36 (כַּחֲלָלִים); HALOT (251) compares Prov. 1:21 (הַמְּזִיחָה); DCH (הַמְּזִיחָה: 571) trans. “sound of your harps”, but suggests as a possibility “multitude, or stream of your corpses”. See also TWOT (1: 219).

<sup>117</sup> Cf. for instance, 2 Sam. 6:5; Pss. 33:2, 57:8, 71:22, 81:2, 92:3, 108:3, 144:9, 150:3; 1 Chr. 13:8, 15:16, 28. In Isa. 5:12, the prophet condemns the ruling elite of Jerusalem for their drunken revelry and their misuse of worshipful music as part of their failure to acknowledge the deeds of YHWH.

tyrant, and stripping him of his dignity also (verses 18-19). In other words, any notion of Hell is not necessarily in view here, as death and decay are the experience of mortals and not that of an immortal deity, which is the point of the taunting song.

Sheol and its synonyms **בוֹר** and **קִבְר** each convey aspects of the king's demise in both the grave and an other-worldly underworld. The underworld in Isa. 14 may have in some sense a dual ontology; that is, Sheol functions as the shared fate of death and decay for all mortals in the material world, being the grave in the one hand, and in the other, the listless, shadowy experience of a gloomy other-world in the land of the dead.<sup>118</sup>

#### Verse 15

Sheol in verse 15 functions as an extremity in the cosmos, both as the obverse of **הַשָּׁמַיִם** and figuratively as a place in the cosmos where YHWH still has dominion. Here a comparison can be made with Isa. 7:11, 57:9, Am. 9:2, Ps. 139:8, and Job 11:8. In verses 13 and 14, where the king is quoted as saying that he will '*ascend the heavens*' (**הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶעֱלֶה**) and ' *dwell on the mountain of assembly in the far reaches of the north*' (**וְאָשַׁב בְּהַר מוֹעֵד בִּירְכַתִּי צָפוֹן**), and '*ascend upon the tops of the cloud*' (**אֶעֱלֶה עַל בִּמְתֵי עָב**) making himself '*like the Most-High*' (**אֲדַמָּה לְעֵלְיֹן**). The obverse of all this is verse 15 and the complete humiliation of the tyrant in the deepest parts of the underworld.

The phrase **אֶל יִרְכַתִּי בּוֹר** '*to the far reaches of the pit*', is contrasted directly with **בִּירְכַתִּי צָפוֹן** '*in the far reaches of the north*', but also with everything that precedes it in verses 13-14.<sup>119</sup> It is

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<sup>118</sup> In his discussion of verses 9-11, Kaiser (1974: 34-36) comes to a similar conclusion stating that "the grave and Sheol remained parallel conceptions for the same thing".

<sup>119</sup> Gray (1956: 257), Kissane (1960: 161), and Jensen (1997: 341) render **בִּירְכַתִּי צָפוֹן** as "recesses of the north". While this rendering makes the repetition of **יִרְכַּה** clear in the translation, "recesses of" seems to obscure the sense of this phrase functioning as the obverse of the furthest reaches or recesses of the pit. Blenkinsopp (2000: 283) renders each occurrence of **יִרְכַּה** as "furthest reaches", which seems to tease out the intended meaning of extremities and contrast more convincingly.

comparable in meaning to ‘*the depths of Sheol*’ (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 86:13; Prov. 9:18), but the exact phrase with **יְרֵכָה** only occurs here. The LXX has **θεμέλια τῆς γῆς** ‘*the foundations of the earth*’. This conveys the same meaning of the deepest parts and the opposite extreme of ‘*the far reaches of the north*’, which the LXX renders as **ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη τὰ ὑψηλὰ τὰ πρὸς βορρᾶν** ‘*upon the lofty mountains toward the north*’.

On verse 15, both Kissane (1960: 165) and Oswalt (1986: 323) draw a comparison with Job 20:6ff, where there is something of a shared vocabulary between verses 6-7 and Isa. 14:13-14 (**עֲלֵה**; **שָׁמַיִם**; **עַב**), but also thematically judgment on the pride of the wicked.

This pericope (verses 12-15) alludes to a variety of mythological themes that scholars have long sought to find the exact parallels for in ancient Near Eastern literature. Before the discovery of the Ugaritic materials, scholars had noted parallels with Greek myths relating to Venus. Connecting with Ugaritic material is the name **אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן** *’ēl ’elyon* and the Mountain of Assembly in the far north, namely Mount Zaphon, which is to be identified with the seat of Baal.<sup>120</sup> However, given that we are dealing with the fall of the king of Babylon, the likelihood is that what we have in Isa. 14 is an amalgamation of mythological themes that Greek, Canaanite and Babylonian mythologies shared, but with the Mesopotamian connection perhaps taking precedence.

In Isa. 14 then, Sheol functions as part of YHWH’s humiliation and punishment on the king of Babylon. In verse 9, Sheol is roused or stirred up to greet the king as he descends into death and the underworld. Contrary to how it often is construed, this example is not a clear poetic personification of Sheol but rather a figurative way of referring to the denizens of Sheol. This idea makes better sense of the third person masculine singular verbs in 9b, **עוֹרֵר** and **הִקִּים**, which are best understood as referring to YHWH; in the context of the taunting song, YHWH is the victor over the Babylonian tyrant and he

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<sup>120</sup> Childs (2001: 126); Jensen (1997: 341). Clifford (1972: 4) also draws a connection between Mount Zion and Baal’s Mount Zaphon.

is the one who has stirred up the district of Sheol and then rouses the Rephaim and raises them from their thrones to greet the king upon his descent. Sheol is wielded by YHWH in his Judgment on the king. Further support for viewing YHWH as the subject of stirring, rousing and raising comes from O'Connell's identification of the concentric structure, where YHWH is placed at the beginning of the song (verse 3) and the end of the passage (verses 22-23). Structurally verses 22-23 function as a coda that shifts from the song to a pronouncement of YHWH. In verse 22, YHWH declares that he will rise up against the sons of the king (וּקְמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם), which echoes verse 9 and the raising of the Rephaim to mock the king himself.

In verse 11, Sheol becomes the place where even the sound of the king's harps, symbols of his prosperity and self-proclaimed divine status, are cast down. Furthermore, Sheol functions both as the grave and the other-worldly underworld. Aspects of the classic underworld feature here, but also details relating to death and desiccation in the grave, such as maggots and worms. Here we have an example of retribution in death for a wicked person, but the king's humiliation and punishment for aspiring to divine status see him brutally humbled to the point of being denied even the basic dignity of a proper burial as the other dead rulers have (verses 18-19). Furthermore, Sheol in verse 11 represents a kind of destruction similar to the occurrence in Isa. 5:14, which bears some parallels in terms of complete humiliation and destruction of the haughty and wealthy.

In verse 15, Sheol bears a resemblance to the classic underworld. However, in the context, the king's demise exceeds that of the norm for others, where Sheol is wielded by YHWH as an agent of his justice, similar to verse 9. This is further underscored by the phrase *'to the furthest reaches of the pit'*. Additionally, the second hophal example of יָרַד implies that YHWH is the one who brings the king down to the deepest recesses of Sheol.

Finally, verse 9 seems to depict a disembodied experience in an otherworldly underworld, with the Rephaim rising up from a state of inactivity to greet the king, whereas, in the context of the king's coveted divine status versus human mortality, verses 11 and 15 picture the fate of the king's corpse.

**iv) Isa. 28:15, 18**

The covenant with death and pact with Sheol in Isa. 28 has attracted a lot of scholarly attention. Some scholars see here an actual covenant with Mot, and the passage has also been interpreted as indicating a political alliance with Egypt in an effort to seek support against the Neo-Assyrian threat.<sup>121</sup> That idolatry and perhaps an actual covenant with a pagan deity are in view here is not in dispute. However, despite various attempts to link this phrase in verses 15 and 18 to a specific deity, the identity of the deity is difficult to ascertain. The difficulty with viewing either Mot or some other foreign divine being in the phrase **מִוֶּת אֵת בְּרִיתנוּ כִּרְתֵנוּ** is that the pact with Sheol as its parallel must be explained.

In verse 15, the LXX reverses the order of death and Hades. The covenant (**διαθηκη**) is made with Hades, whereas agreements (**συνθήκας**)<sup>122</sup> are made with death. In verse 18, however, the covenant is with death, and rather than reiterating **συνθήκας** for Hades, the LXX paraphrases: **καὶ ἡ ἐλπὶς ὑμῶν ἢ πρὸς τὸν ἄδην οὐ μὴ ἐμμεΐνη** ‘*and your hope towards Hades will not continue*’. This may suggest that, for the LXX translators, death and Sheol/Hades were interchangeable. In this way, the LXX version reads as a more general indictment on the people’s idolatry and perhaps false hope in local chthonic deities, or the words of false prophets.

As mentioned, some scholars read these phrases as a literal covenant with Mot. Kaiser (1980: 251) appears to view the covenant with death as an allusion to Mot, but he qualifies this by saying that we must interpret “cautiously in a very general and metaphorical sense”, as the saying is intended to characterize the attitude of Isaiah’s opponents. Clements (1980: 229) sees verse 14 as indicating that the leaders in Jerusalem are congratulating themselves on their successful negotiation of a treaty with

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<sup>121</sup> So, for example, Clements (1980: 229); Hays (2010: 212-240); Kissane (1941: 318); Stansell (1996: 78); Sweeney (1996: 369).

<sup>122</sup> **Συνθηκη** “mutual agreement entered” (Muraoka: 657). The noun occurs three more times in the LXX: Isa. 30:1; Dan. 11:6, 17. In Isa. 30:1, **συνθηκη** is used to render **מִסְכָּה**, which specifically refers to a molten image or idol (cf. Ex. 32:4, 8; Deut. 9:16, 27:15; Num. 33:52; 2 Kgs 17:16; Isa. 42:17; Nah. 1:14; Hab. 2:18). Cf. Wis. 1:16.

a foreign power against Assyria. For Clements, the prophet is using heavily satirical language to describe a political alliance, which, though he admits that it is difficult to determine who this is, he thinks is likely Egypt. He then interprets verse 18 as indicating that the treaty will lead to defeat and disaster. He also comments on Kaiser's interpretation and disagrees with the idea that the covenant with death has anything to do with Mot or Canaanite deities. Clements ultimately concludes that whatever the case may be, the treaty, which he sees as intended to secure military support for Judah against Assyria, was "nothing other than a promise of doom".

Day (1989: 85), on the other hand, argues that the description of the rulers in Jerusalem "making a covenant with Death and Sheol in order to avert the Assyrian threat" alludes rather to the cult of Molech and that scholars are at a loss to explain the common view of an alliance with Egypt, or indeed why Egypt should be called Death or Sheol. Hays (2010: 217-32), however, believes this can be satisfactorily explained by way of a paronomasia on the name of the Egyptian goddess *Mut*.

Hays provides a lengthy and extremely clever exposition of the goddess and her cult, connecting many of the elements in the text of Isa. 28 to the worship of this mother goddess. There is not enough space in this short study to address his argument fully, but the connection is largely unconvincing, as Hays does not adequately explain Sheol's presence in the passage. If the paronomasia of מוֹת is clearly alluding to the Egyptian goddess *Mut*, the same does not clearly apply to the parallel phrase containing Sheol. With the description of debauchery and cultic practices in verses 7-8, Hays notes van der Toorn's (1988: 199-213, 215) conclusion that part of Isaiah's condemnation of the people is for resorting to necromancy. If Sheol is in fact derived from the verb שָׂאֵל, we might hope to find some form of wordplay to equal that of מוֹת and *Mut*, but there is no obvious wordplay on the name Sheol. However, Hays does not link this to further wordplay on the name Sheol, but he does suggest that with the inclusion of Sheol "the hearer would have grasped fully the paronomasia of *Mwt*: the agreement is not merely heretical, but fatal". The immediate problem with this is that death and Sheol are frequently

paired in the HB and are understood as synonymous or correlative. There is no reason why the same should not apply here without the need for puns or cryptic language.

The masculine noun *חזיה*, in the phrase *ועם שאול עשינו חזיה*, usually denotes a ‘seer’ (cf. 1 Kgs 17:13)<sup>123</sup> and here may indicate that false prophecy is the intended meaning. In verse 18, the corresponding noun is feminine: *חזויה* ‘vision’.<sup>124</sup> However, the phrase translated literally as ‘and we have made a vision with Sheol’ is awkward. Blenkinsopp (2000: 392) notes that despite the noun’s common meaning, the context suggests a “pact” or “agreement” as we find in most standard English versions.<sup>125</sup> That being said, false prophecy is likely part of the intended meaning of Isaiah’s indictment of his opponents here. This is made clear in the final part of verse 7: *שגו בראה פקן פליליה*: ‘they go astray in vision and stumble in judgment’. Van der Toorn (1988: 201) notes that the nouns *ראה* and *פליליה* together “embrace the specific activities of prophet and priest”, and these are the rulers Isaiah condemns. Additionally, the nouns *כזב* ‘a lie’ and *שקר* ‘falsehood’ may also allude to false prophecy, as well as the veneration of foreign deities and idolatry.<sup>126</sup> *שקר* occurs frequently in Jeremiah with reference to Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness, and may also allude to deception from false prophecy in Isa. 28:15.<sup>127</sup> Likewise, in various contexts *כזב* refers to deception from false prophets, and perhaps also false gods.<sup>128</sup> On this point, van der Toorn (1988: 203-04) argues for the possibility that *כזב* and

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<sup>123</sup> BDB: 302-03. *חזיה* also appears to be an Aramaic borrowing (TDOT, 4: 280-81).

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Isa. 21:2, 29:11; Dan. 8:5, 8. In the vision of the goat in Dan. 8, *חזויה* refers to the vision of its horns. KJV: “notable” (8:5, 8); ESV: “conspicuous” (8:5, 8); NRSV: “prominent” (8:8) – NRSV leaves out *חזויה* in verse 5.

<sup>125</sup> Note YLT: “with Sheol we have made a provision”.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Isa. 44:20, 57:4; Jer. 3:23, 10:14 [=57:17], 13:25, 16:19; Hab. 2:18 (*שקר*); Am. 9:2 (*כזב*). Day (1989: 61); Williamson (1998:24n). Day also lists the use of piel of *כזב* in Isa. 57:11, presumably as another allusion to the worship of foreign deities. The context there supports this understanding (see analysis at 3.2.1.vi). Van der Toorn (1988: 201-02) notes that with the mention of lies and deceit, the prophet does not reproduce the words of his opponents but that the saying forms an “oblique accusation”.

<sup>127</sup> Carpenter/Grisanti (NIDOTTE, 4: 248). Cf. Isa. 9:14; Jer. 14:14, 23:25, 23:26, 27:10, 29:21; Hab. 2:18; Zech. 10:2.

<sup>128</sup> Carpenter/Grisanti (NIDOTTE, 2: 620). Cf. Ezek. 13:7, 9, 11, 21:34, 22:28; Am. 2:4; Ps. 40:5.

שִׁקְרָה cryptically refer the deities Chemosh and Milcom,<sup>129</sup> as these were popular deities in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

The suggestion by Day and Van der Toorn that this passage more likely refers to Molech, and perhaps also Chemosh, finds support in other passages (1 Kgs 11:7; Isa. 57:9) and the fact that these deities were worshipped in Jerusalem. However, while the veneration of a pagan deity does seem to underlie the covenant with death and pact with Sheol, the identity of the deity in question does not appear to be the objective of the saying. In other words, the deity is only secondary, whereas the specific transgression of abandoning the covenant with YHWH in favour of another, and what that amounts to, is the consequential factor. The language is figurative, and the saying is more likely a dysphemism. In other words, the established covenant with YHWH is a covenant with life, deliverance and protection from enemies and dwelling safely in the land. Any form of obeisance, honour, veneration of or appeal to pagan deities in order to placate death and avoid destruction, amounts to precisely the opposite: a covenant with death itself and an agreement with Sheol, where lies and falsehood are their futile refuge and shelter.

#### v) Isa. 38:10, 18

In Isa. 38 we learn that King Hezekiah has become ill ‘unto death’ (לְמוֹת). Isaiah is then sent to inform him of his imminent death. The king then weeps bitterly and prays to YHWH reminding him that he has walked before God in faithfulness and has done what was right in God’s eyes (verse 3). God hears his prayer and then instructs Isaiah to inform Hezekiah that fifteen years have been added to the king’s life and that both the king and the city will be delivered from the hand of Assyria.

Like other deliverance psalms, as we will see in chapter 4, the various elements of physical

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<sup>129</sup> Van der Toorn (1988: 204) suggests that Moloch is coterminous with names like Malik and Muluk and that Milcom is likely the same deity as Molech in Isa. 57:9.

illness, distress from the threat of enemies, and teetering on the brink of death and Sheol are present in Hezekiah's psalm. What is also noteworthy is that Hezekiah indicates that he views his predicament as the result of sin.

Sheol in verse 10 is first the threat or brink of death posed by Hezekiah's illness. In 10a, we have the phrase *בְּרֵמִי יָמַי אֵלֶכָה* 'In the prime of my days I must depart'. This indicates that Hezekiah's death will be premature. In 10b, the phrase *בְּשַׁעְרֵי שְׂאוֹל פִּקְדְתִּי יֵתֵר שְׁנוֹתַי* 'I am counted in the gates of Sheol for the remainder of my years' may indicate that Hezekiah perceived his illness as judgment and separation from God. *יֵתֵר שְׁנוֹתַי* further adds to the portrayal of Sheol as the brink of death; that is, Hezekiah is not yet dead but will remain in adversity and illness until his actual death, which in some sense is already a state of Sheol for him.<sup>130</sup>

The syntax and pual of *פִּקְד* in verse 10, however, present some difficulties in translation. In the LXX, *פִּקְדְתִּי* is taken as the beginning of the final part of the clause and rendered as *καταλείπω* "leave (behind)"<sup>131</sup>: *καταλείψω τὰ ἔτη τὰ ἐπίλοιπα* 'I shall leave behind the remainder of my years'.<sup>132</sup> This rendering of *פִּקְדְתִּי*, of course, correlates with what we have already learned about Hezekiah's predicament – that his life will be cut short. However, if we read *פִּקְדְתִּי* in the same sense as the pual of *פִּקְד* in Ex. 38:21, then being recorded, numbered or counted in the gates of Sheol may

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<sup>130</sup> Kaiser (1980: 404) understands Hezekiah to mean that he "supposed his sufferings would inevitably lead to death", but that this differs from the usual assertion that the speaker or psalmist is already in Sheol. We may also relate this to Gen. 37:35 and Jacob's determination that he will remain in mourning until he himself enters Sheol. However, *בְּשַׁעְרֵי שְׂאוֹל פִּקְדְתִּי* may also indicate that for whatever time he has left, that remaining time is like Sheol itself. Importantly, Sheol as a present state for one suffering illness is a significant topic, especially in the Psalms. This will be dealt with further in the following chapter. See also Johnston (2002: Ch. 4).

<sup>131</sup> BDAG: 520.

<sup>132</sup> Regarding the syntax of verse 10, many translations appear to follow the LXX and read *פִּקְדְתִּי* as independent of Sheol, translating variously as being "deprived of" or "robbed of". For example, ASV, KJV, NASB, NIV read: *פִּקְדְתִּי יֵתֵר שְׁנוֹתַי*. GK §121*d*: "I must forgo the residue of my years". However, NRSV and ESV read: *בְּשַׁעְרֵי שְׂאוֹל פִּקְדְתִּי* – "I am consigned to the gates of Sheol". So also Blenkinsopp (2000: 479); Kaiser (1980: 398). Wildberger (2002: 457) reads "I am commanded".

be another way of saying that he is counted among those who descend into the pit, which is perhaps also compatible with יורדי בור in verse 18 (cf. Pss. 28:1, 88:5, 143:7). Furthermore, in verses 11-14 the king seems to have been resigned to his fate,<sup>133</sup> and describes his experience of impending death as a state where he has already been cut off from life; he will no longer perceive YHWH or look upon mortals in the land of the living.

The fact that Hezekiah's illness and imminent death is perceived as judgment finds support from the description of judgment and separation from YHWH in verses 11-15. With the additional threat of Assyria, Sheol may also be viewed as taking on a larger role in divine judgment on the kingdom of Judah itself.

In verse 17, Hezekiah's deliverance from the שחת בלי 'pit of want/nothingness'<sup>134</sup> is directly linked with the forgiveness of his sins. He continues in verse 18 with a familiar refrain describing Sheol and death as those who do not thank or praise YHWH (cf. Pss. 88:11-13, 115:17; Eccl. 9:10). While this may be a subtle personification, it likely refers to the dead metonymically and collectively (cf. Isa. 14:9; see 3.2.1. *iii*). This may also find support with the inclusion of the synonymous underworld phrase יורדי בור 'those who descend into the pit', as the phrase seems to refer to the wicked or those who rebel against YHWH elsewhere. In this way, the combination of these elements indicates that שחת בלי and שאול in this passage are likewise aligned with the wicked,<sup>135</sup> which further supports the understanding that Hezekiah viewed his premature death as judgment for iniquity or transgression.

The occurrence of Sheol here is altogether negative and impossible to be spoken of in any positive way. With that said, by this stage of composing his psalm, Hezekiah has been healed, fifteen

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<sup>133</sup> Brueggemann (1998: 306).

<sup>134</sup> NRSV: "pit of destruction". The LXX appears to omit 17a and then paraphrases 17b: εἴλου γάρ μου τὴν ψυχὴν, ἵνα μὴ ἀπόληται 'Indeed, you have chosen my soul so that it may not perish'.

<sup>135</sup> As we have seen, the use of the biblical application of the phrase consistently alludes to the wicked and those in opposition to and separated from YHWH.

years have been added to his life and he has been promised deliverance from Assyria. Sheol, however, is where Hezekiah expected to go, and from the various details regarding separation from God and judgment in verses 11-15, it appears that Hezekiah viewed his predicament and dying before his time as divine judgment. The elements of premature death, physical illness, and the threat of enemies relate Hezekiah's psalm to other deliverance psalms, as we will see in the following chapter. In the context of divine judgment, the inclusion of the phrase '*those who descend into the pit*' in verse 18, as well as the '*pit of want/nothingness*' in verse 17, indicates that Sheol is aligned with the wicked, the rebels, and those separated from YHWH, as Hezekiah perceived himself to be. However, it is notable that like all the deaths of the righteous, Sheol is not ultimately mentioned in Hezekiah's death. Sheol therefore, as in Jonah and other deliverance psalms, is connected with a negative death as the result of divine judgment from which the psalmist, Jonah or Hezekiah are ultimately delivered.

#### **vi) Isa. 57:9**

The text of Isa. 57:9 is difficult. The poetry is also obscure, and a range of interpretations and emendations have been proffered by scholars. A great deal of attention has also been given to the reading of לַמֵּלֶךְ in 9a. From the context of chapter 57, it is clear that idolatry and sins associated with the worship of foreign deities are in view here. This has led many scholars to reread the MT's לַמֵּלֶךְ as a reference to the Canaanite and Ammonite deity, Molech. The impact this may have on our understanding of the function of Sheol in this passage is potentially very significant, as the Valley of Hinnom at the southern end of the city of Jerusalem was the location where child sacrifices to Molech took place.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, along with the adjacent Kidron valley, Hinnom was also a burial valley and

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. Lev. 18:21; 2 Kgs 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3, 33:6; Jer. 7:31, 7:32, 19:6, 32:35.

part of Jerusalem's southern necropolis.<sup>137</sup>

While explicit references to the Canaanite deity Molech are relatively rare in the HB,<sup>138</sup> Isa. 57:9 is, according to Day (1989: 1, 16), at least an implied reference to the cult of Molech.<sup>139</sup> The implication is very clear in light of 5b, along with the material that precedes it. There, Jerusalem's topography is referred to in verse 5 with the mention of the slaughter of the children in the valleys:

שחטי הילדים בנחלים תחת סעפי הסלעים

*'slaughtering the children in the valleys under the clefts of the rocks'*

Day further suggests that verse 9 may be a poetic way of referring to the children being sent down to Molech in Sheol. Furthermore, as Watts (2005: 826) notes, the use of שור in the phrase ותשרי למלך in the sense of travel or a journey is found only here and at Ezek. 27:25.<sup>140</sup> The verb may, however, relate to going or travelling downwards and be cognate with Akkadian *šurru(m)*.<sup>141</sup> When Jerusalem's topography is considered, this perhaps makes good sense in relation to the worship of Molech in the Valley of Hinnom, where the southern end of the city is the deeper valley descent from both the present day Old City and that of the Iron Age.

In 9b, ותשלחי צריך עד-מרחק *'and you sent your messengers far abroad'* may refer to necromancers who journey to the underworld to enquire of the dead, or Molech. In light of the

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<sup>137</sup> Haupt (1919: 45). In the LXX, Hinnom is rendered in Jer. 19:2, 6 as πολυανδρείον, which, according to Papaioanou (2013: 4-5) literally means "populous", but can also refer to a burial ground (see L&S: 1436). NETS: "common burial ground". Bailey (1986: 187), without mentioning the verbs, suggests that *hinnom* may be derived from the verb "to sleep" or "to wail", perhaps from Arabic (see BDB: 245).

<sup>138</sup> According to Scullion (1982: 157), *melek* in Job 18:14 is an epithet of Mot.

<sup>139</sup> Though the MT has לַמֶּלֶךְ *'to the king'*, many scholars agree on the reference to Molech. So, for example: Blenkinsopp (2003: 153); Day (1989: 1, 16); Scullion (1982: 154); Westermann (1969: 323-24); Whybray (1975: 205). In his excursus, Blenkinsopp (162-63) provides a list of double meanings appearing throughout Isa. 57:3-13, including מֶלֶךְ = *Melek and Molech*.

<sup>140</sup> The meaning of שור in various contexts is uncertain but inferred from context.

<sup>141</sup> HALOT: 1451.

topographical details above, this may also mean that they consulted the deity in the Valley of Hinnom. Given the parallel in 9c then, *וּתְשִׁילֵי עַד-שְׁאוֹל* ‘and you brought down as far as Sheol’, this is a tenable position. Sheol here is also an extreme locale in the cosmos, but this is perhaps a secondary feature.<sup>142</sup>

With the references to idolatry, we may also say that Isa. 57:9 depicts national spiritual adultery.<sup>143</sup> In this instance, Sheol is not the result of the nation’s folly and adultery, but in one sense is actively pursued, which further supports the connection with idolatry and the worship of chthonic deities. From Isa. 57:1-10, the sins of idolatry listed and detailed broadly relate to pursuing and worshipping other gods.<sup>144</sup> Sending envoys to Sheol, therefore, may allude to the practice of necromancy but here in the context of the worship of Molech. This is particularly clear from the reference to the practice of child sacrifice in verse 5.<sup>145</sup> As noted above, this occurrence, therefore, relates to the covenant with death and Sheol in Isa. 28, and further supports the interpretation there that the deity in question is likewise Molech.

### 3.2.2. Hos. 13:14

<sup>14a</sup> *From the hand of Sheol I will ransom them? From death I will redeem them?*

<sup>14b</sup> *Where are/I shall be your plagues, O Death? Where is/I shall be your devastation, O Sheol?*

<sup>14c</sup> *Compassion is hidden from my eyes.*

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<sup>142</sup> Sheol as a cosmological extremity in Isa. 57:9 is also a secondary feature in Johnston’s main emphases (2002: 80). Furthermore, along with Deut. 32:22, Isa. 57:9 is the only other biblical occurrence of Sheol bearing the preposition *עד*.

<sup>143</sup> Wilson (2009: 161).

<sup>144</sup> Whybray (1975: 206). A comparison between Isa. 57:3-13 and Jer. 2:18-37 has been noted by Blenkinsopp (2003: 161).

<sup>145</sup> This may also play a role in the development of the concept of Gehenna, as Blenkinsopp notes (2003: 160-61).

For Hos. 13:14, the wider context of chapter 13 includes a brutal description of the punishment on Ephraim for its idolatry beginning in verse 7 and continuing through to verse 16. Several details, such as the coming east wind (יְבוּא קָרִים) in verse 15 and the description of the devastation of Samaria in verse 16 allude to the threat of Assyria.<sup>146</sup> Destruction and exile are then the likely results of the nation's sin of worshipping Baal and engaging in human sacrifice (verses 2-3). However, the text of Hosea is notoriously difficult and verse 14 presents a number of interpretive challenges.

First, the initial two clauses in 14a are read either as two rhetorical questions or as parallel first person statements of God's intention to ransom and redeem Ephraim from Death and Sheol. Second, it is not clear whether the form אֵיךְ in 14b is the interrogative "where", or an apocopated first person form of אֶהייה making two statements of God's intention to be the plagues and destruction of Death and Sheol. Finally, the hapax noun נֶחֱם in 14c is similarly difficult following 14a-b. It is decidedly negative, whereas the textual problems of 14a-b leave room for a positive reading. The discussion here will focus on these ambiguities and some of the possible interpretations.

The initial phrase, מִיַּד שְׂאוּל, occurs three times in the HB: Hosea 13:14, Pss. 49:16 and 89:49. In both psalms, the object of deliverance is an individual, whereas the object of deliverance (or possible deliverance) in Hos. 13:14 is the nation of Ephraim. Importantly, in each of the above examples, God's power over the forces of Death and Sheol is positively affirmed.

Though the translational consensus reads 14a as two rhetorical questions, the interrogative particle does not appear in this verse. Day (1996: 245) notes that all the ancient versions, including 1 Cor. 15:55 and Isa. 26:19, prefer a positive interpretation, where the two clauses are taken as statements of ultimate deliverance.<sup>147</sup> However, he maintains that one is constrained to find support in the text for

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<sup>146</sup> Stuart (1988: 207-09).

<sup>147</sup> The verb פָּדָה occurs in the qal fifty-three times in the HB with the meaning of "ransom" or "buy out" (BDB: 804; HALOT: 912). As we find here in 14a, פָּדָה often parallels גָּאֹל (TDOT, 11: 484). Cf. Lev. 27:27; Isa. 35:9-10, 51:10-11; Jer. 31:11; Ps. 69:19.

a positive reading.<sup>148</sup> The reason for this is that the greater context, especially verse 15, along with the final phrase in 14c, **נחם יסתר מעיני** ‘*compassion is hidden from my eyes*’, underscores the negative reading. This also supports the reading of 14a as two rhetorical questions.

Wolff (1974: 228) provides another example of such a clause being rendered as a question in Hos 4:16b (**עֲתָה יִרְעֵם יְהוָה כִּכְבֹּשׁ בַּמְרַחֵב**). He also cites support from JM §161a. The problem here, however, is that for rhetorical questions without the interrogative **ה**, JM provides examples that instead are understood as rhetorical questions when after a **ו** conjunction the statement introduces an opposition.<sup>149</sup> Hos. 4:16b and 13:14a would appear to be different, as this rule does not apply in either case.

The challenges of 14b are comparable with 14a and centre on the possible interrogative form **אֵהָיָה**. For Stuart (1987: 200) **אֵהָיָה** is a regional form of “where?” representing a northern dialect. He also highlights its use in 13:10a: **אֵהָיָה מֶלֶכְךָ אֲפֹיָה** ‘*Where is your king then?*’.<sup>150</sup> However, the theory that Hosea is written in a distinct northern dialect has not been properly established.<sup>151</sup> The LXX understands **אֵהָיָה** in both 13:10a and 13:14b as an interrogative adverb and translates it with the Greek equivalent **πῶς**.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, the Vulgate reads *ero* in 14b, yet in verse 10a it reads the interrogative: *Ubi est rex tuus* “where is your king?”<sup>153</sup> Whatever the correct reading is, this highlights the difficulty

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<sup>148</sup> Day (1980: 312).

<sup>149</sup> JM (§161a): 14:16, 11:23; 2 Sam. 11:11; Isa. 37:11; Jer. 25:29; 45:5; 49:12; Ezek. 20:31; Jon. 4:11.

<sup>150</sup> **אֲפֹיָה** often follows interrogatives, but this is not the case in verse 14. See also Wolff (1974: 221); HALOT: 78; BDB: 66. Cf. Judg. 9:38; Isa 19:12, 22:1; Job 17:15.

<sup>151</sup> Andersen and Freedman (1980: 67). While Stuart’s commentary in WBC is more recent than Andersen and Freedman’s AB commentary, the theory of Hosea’s language representing a distinct northern dialect has not been confirmed. The treatment by Macintosh in ICC is very instructive on this and other linguistic issues. He points out that the expected shibboleths associated with northern dialects are absent from Hosea, and furthermore that a supposed effort to standardize the text by Judean redactors is precluded on the basis of a lack of affinity with the language of Judah or standard biblical Hebrew; Macintosh (1997: liv-lv).

<sup>152</sup> Symmachus reads ἔσομαι ‘*I shall be*’ in 14b.

<sup>153</sup> Wolff (1974: 221); Macintosh (1997: 541).

of this form, but may also leave room for a more flexible interpretation in light of its ostensible ambiguity.

For **מִוֶּה**, some manuscripts have the singular **רִבְרִיךְ**.<sup>154</sup> It is usually translated as “plagues”, but Wolff (1974: 221) prefers the secondary meaning of “thorns” to parallel more closely with Sheol’s “sting”. This reflects the LXX rendering of **קִטְבּ** as **κεντρον**.<sup>155</sup> The LXX, however, translates **רִבְרִי** with **δίκη** “legal penalty, punishment”.<sup>156</sup> That being said, the use of **רִבְרִי** as a “plague” or “pestilence” is well attested.<sup>157</sup> Interestingly, in 1 Cor. 15:55, St. Paul quotes 13:14b but writes **νίκη/νίκος** “victory”<sup>158</sup> in place of **δίκη**. It has been suggested, given that Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus have variants that are close to Paul’s citation, that Paul’s *Vorlage* actually had **νίκη** instead of **δίκη**.<sup>159</sup> In light of this, it seems likely that Paul’s reading of “victory” is to reinforce his intended message of Christ’s victory over death in his resurrection, which he connects with his allusion to Isa 25:8 in verse 54.<sup>160</sup>

That being said, the LXX’s rendering of **קִטְבּ** (**קִטְבֵּךְ שְׂאִיִל**) as **κεντρον** “sting” is not maintained in the other three occurrences of **קִטְבּ** in the HB: Deut. 32:24, Ps. 91:6 and Isa. 28:2. Nor would the meaning of “sting” fit these contexts. Rather, the understanding of **קִטְבּ** as destruction or devastation in connection with a plague or pestilence is better supported by these passages. Paul uses **κεντρον** after the LXX here in 1 Cor. 15:55, and the versions appear to vary significantly.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Macintosh (1997: 550).

<sup>155</sup> HALOT: 212. Cf. Ps. 91:6.

<sup>156</sup> BDAG: 250.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Ex. 5:3, 9:3, 15; Lev. 26:25; Num. 14:12; Deut. 28:21; 2 Sam. 24:13, 15.

<sup>158</sup> BDAG: 673.

<sup>159</sup> Beale and Carson (2007: 747-48).

<sup>160</sup> Beale and Carson (2007: 748).

<sup>161</sup> Macintosh (1997: 550).

The MT's נָחַם, in the phrase יִסְתֵּר מֵעֵינַי 'Compassion is hidden from my eyes', is a hapax. Wolff (1974: 222) cites Rashi's comparison of this noun with נָעַם to show that the final נ is part of the root, and hence, being derived from the verb of the same root, the noun carries the meaning of "comfort" or "compassion".<sup>162</sup> If in Hos 13:14c נָחַם is to be understood as referring to God's compassion or consolation, then the niph'al use of the verb in Jon. 3:9-10, where God may be comforted and change his mind regarding Nineveh and ultimately does, is a useful comparison. Moreover, יִסְתֵּר in Hos 13:14c is also a niph'al referring to God. In this way, it would seem that God is turning a blind eye to the devastation of Ephraim and refusing to be comforted or to feel compassion.

### **Ambiguity: Negative and Positive Readings**

Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties of the language of Hosea, perhaps owing partly to the book's transmission history, the presence of wordplay is a possible device used by the prophet to create ambiguity.

**14a (negative reading):** *From the hand of Sheol I will ransom them? From death I will redeem them?* Read as two rhetorical questions, the expected answer is negative. However, one might also conceive of God deliberating; deliverance is still contingent upon Ephraim's repentance. Nevertheless, in the context, it would appear that the metaphor is appropriately negative. Implicitly, the nation's condition of being in Sheol is spoken of as if it is already their reality; Death and Sheol are a guarantee, making it possible for God to ask these questions.

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<sup>162</sup> HALOT: 689; BDB: 636. JPS reads: "Revenge shall be far from my thoughts", and the rationale for this is based on the use of נָחַם in Deut. 32:36 and Isa. 1:24 (see JPS commentary). This reading is possible, especially in the sense of Isa. 1:24. However, the context also allows for the possibility of a negative reading. See my comment below. The LXX has παράκλησις "encouragement, exhortation" or "comfort". Macintosh (1997: 550); BDAG: 766.

**14a (positive reading):** *I will ransom them from the hand of Sheol; I will redeem them from death.* Read as two positive statements, it would seem that deliverance is a given. One might also construe these statements as a positive affirmation of God’s covenant with Israel. In the context, however, a positive statement such as this is superfluous and makes little sense. Yet given the lack of any interrogative particle and the possibility of reading these clauses as statements rather than questions, lends an ambiguity to 14a that has made a positive rendering and interpretation possible in the LXX and Isa 26:19, not to mention other ancient versions.

**14b (negative reading):** *Where are your plagues, O Death? Where is your destruction, O Sheol?* If  $\text{אֵיךְ}$  is taken as an unusual or incorrect form of the interrogative adverb  $\text{אֵיךְ}$  “where?”, then the negative interpretation fits the context. It also affirms the reading of 14a as two rhetorical questions. Moreover, a chiasm is also formed, which may be construed as further support for the negative reading:

A – [Shall] I ransom them from **Sheol**?  
           B – [Shall] I redeem them from **Death**?  
           B<sup>2</sup> – Where are your plagues, O **Death**?  
           A<sup>2</sup> – Where is your destruction, O **Sheol**?

In this way, one might read 14b as God calling on or summoning the plagues of Death and destruction of Sheol, as we then read in 14c that God does not see, or refuses to see compassion (more on this below).

**14b (positive reading):** *I will be/where are your plagues, O Death (?); I will be/where is your destruction, O Sheol (?).* If taken as two rhetorical questions following the positive statements of deliverance in 14a, then the expected answer to 14b is positive, and perhaps logical sequentially, with the implication being that Death and Sheol are now powerless. If, however, we read  $\text{אֵיךְ}$  as an apocopated form of  $\text{אֵיךְ}$ , then further ambiguity is generated: God may be stating that he will destroy

Death and Sheol, or, in line with the negative reading, he may be stating that he himself will be the plagues of Death and the destruction of Sheol.

**14c:** *Compassion is hidden from my eyes.* It is difficult to extract a positive reading from 14c. This clause is independent of the chiastic structure of 14a to 14b. It functions as a clarifying statement following the ambiguity of the previous series of questions. One might construe its meaning then, as a statement by God that he will turn a blind eye, so to speak, following the summons of Death and Sheol.

It is not possible to know for certain whether the difficulties presented by the text of Hos. 13:14 display a deliberate play on words and ambiguity. However, it is arguable that the later positive interpretations discussed above were only made possible due to these ambiguities and possible polysemy of **שְׁאוֹל**.

What is clear from the text is that Sheol in Hos. 13:14 is metaphorically the mass grave of Ephraim; that is to say, Sheol functions as the state of that nation in exile post judgment. This has been determined by the context of judgment on Ephraim and Israel in chapter 13, along with the destructive east wind mentioned in 13:15. In this way, given the figurative use of Sheol here, it is then reasonable to assert that Sheol in Hosea is not intended to be read as the literal and supernatural underworld. The collective grave metaphor denotes a consequence and punishment for disobedience that precludes the understanding that Sheol is here functioning in accordance with the standard definition as the otherworldly, unseen place of the dead wherein the shades, ghosts, or Rephaim reside in perpetual gloom.

As the state of the nation in exile, deliverance from Sheol lends itself well to the language of resurrection. The link between Isa. 26:13 to 27:11 and Hos. 13:4 to 14:10, where Isa. 26:19 and Hos. 13:14 constitute one of eight noted parallels highlighted by John Day (1980: 309-19), shows that the author of Isa. 26:19 understands Hos. 13:14 positively, yet frames his interpretation in resurrection terms. We may then link these passages with the national restoration passage in Ezek. 37, where the

language of resurrection finds its most detailed and vivid depiction. These connections are significant in that, rather than affirm some bifurcation between the dual notions of Sheol or the underworld and resurrection of the dead, they support the possibility that the two ideas, or at least underworld and resurrection language, are conceptually compatible.

### 3.2.3. Am. 9:2

*If they dig into Sheol, from there my hand shall take them,  
and if they ascend the heavens, from there I will bring them down*

Sheol appears in the fifth and final vision reported in Am. 9:1-4. This vision details the final pronouncement of judgement on the people and expresses how inexorable that judgement will be. This is expressed in five conditional clauses (9:2-4) listing various extremes in the known world and in the cosmos where one might wish to escape from God's judgment.

Sheol in 9:2, is named as the obverse of the heavens and the mode of reaching the underworld, in this case, is through digging (חָתַר).<sup>163</sup> Accessing Sheol by way of digging into it readily implies the grave in a this-worldly sense, yet here Sheol is often interpreted as the traditional underworld in an otherworldly sense.<sup>164</sup> However, both otherworldly and this-worldly aspects of the underworld and grave are appropriate here, as the imagery underscores the absurdity of escape from the wrath of God and from annihilation and death by digging into the locus of the dead.

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<sup>163</sup> Stuart (1988: 392) compares Ps. 139:7-8 and notes the merism expressing God's total sovereignty over the universe, and also compares Amarna letter 264:1 – "Whether we ascend to the heavens or descend to the nether-world [*arṣiti*] our head is in your hands".

<sup>164</sup> So for example Jeremias (1998: 157-58); Paul (1991: 277); Soggin (1982: 119); Stuart (1988: 392).

The verb **התַר** occurs a total of eight times in the HB, which includes Am. 9:2 (Job 24:16; Ezek. 8:8 (2x), 12:5, 7, 12; Jon. 1:13).<sup>165</sup> Each biblical occurrence of **התַר** carries some sense of escape, with the exception of Ezek. 8:8. There, the prophet is instructed to bore a hole in the wall of the court to view the secret idolatry and abominations taking place inside. In Job 24:16, an adulterer bores holes in houses wishing to be unseen. In Ezek. 12, the prophet's symbolic act of boring a hole in the wall and carrying his baggage through it into exile becomes part of what will happen to the prince and the city in their deportation to Babylon. In Jon. 1:13, **התַר** is used to describe the rowing of the sailors, as in digging into the water to escape the peril at sea and get to dry land. In Amos, the same sense of boring a hole into the wall of a tomb is perhaps possible,<sup>166</sup> but may also be unique, as a figurative expression for digging into the underworld.

In 2a<sup>2</sup>, the expression **יְדֵי תִקְחֵם מִשָּׁם** 'from there my hand shall take them' may be seen as a euphemism for God putting the fugitives to death. **לָקַח** occurs 966 times in the HB and has a large semantic range,<sup>167</sup> as well as clear connections with death in various contexts (cf. Gen. 5:24; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Ps. 31:14; Prov. 1:19; Jon. 4:3). Similarly, **אוֹרִידֵם** 'I will bring them down' in 2b<sup>2</sup>, is a euphemism for death by God's hand expressed by way of the traditional term for descent into Sheol: **הַשְׁמִימִים**. How one ascends or climbs into the heavens is not as obvious as digging into Sheol, but if **הַשְׁמִימִים** is to be understood as the abode of God, then there is further irony attached to the attempt at escaping

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<sup>165</sup> Paul (1991: 277) notes that the verb implies strenuous activity, and compares Job 24:16 and Ezek. 8:8, 12:5, 7, 12. If nothing else, this might convey a frantic attempt at escape and simultaneously bolsters the absurdity of fleeing from an omnipresent and all-powerful being. The LXX, however, plays down the notion of escape through digging in 2a, and equates Sheol/Hades with the grave: *ἐν κατορυγῶσιν εἰς ᾗδου* 'If they be buried in Hades'. In Job 24:16, Ezek. 12:5, 7, and 12, the LXX renders **התַר** with *διόρυσσω* 'break through, break in' (BDAG: 251). Interestingly, this is the verb used in the Gospels for Jesus' description of thieves breaking into houses in Matt. 6:19-20, 24:43, and Luke 12:39 (Pelt/Kaiser, Jr., NIDOTTE, 2: 331). The derivative noun, **מִתְהַרֵּה** (occurring twice: Ex 22:1; Jer. 2:34) relates to burglary.

<sup>166</sup> Note the architecture of many hewn tombs resembling that of four-room homes. See in particular Barkay (1994: 96-164); Faust and Bunimovitz (2008: 150-70); Mazar (1976: 1-8).

<sup>167</sup> Els (NIDOTTE, 2: 813).

divine judgment by fleeing to the realm of God. Additionally, this underscores the poetic function of the vocabulary.

Reinforcing the sense of Sheol as an extremity in the cosmos, a chiasm is readily noticeable in the context if the phrase **בקרקע הים** ‘*at the bottom of the sea*’ in 9:3b can be taken as corresponding with Sheol. Connections between the underworld and water are well-known, passages such as Job 26:5-6 and Jon. 2:6, for example, clearly connect Sheol with the sea or a watery abyss. Tromp (1969) and Johnston (2002) have discussed various underworld connections with water at length, but, as Johnston affirms, Hebrew cosmology is “varied and imprecise” (2002: 115). With that said, the chiasm begins at 2a and ends with the fourth conditional at 3b with 9:4 acting as something of a coda. As a great depth, **בשאול** in 2a corresponds with **בקרקע הים** in 3b, and as a great height, **השמים** in 2b corresponds with **הכרמל** in 3a:

**2a** – *‘If they dig into Sheol’*

**2b** – *‘If they ascend the heavens’*

**3a** – *‘If they hide on the top of Carmel’*

**3b** – *‘If they conceal themselves from before my eyes at the bottom of the sea’*

Here, Sheol is not an abstract depth in the same sense as Isa. 7:11. As we have seen, in Isa. 7:11 Sheol is translated in the LXX not as Hades, but as βάθος ‘*a depth*’. The pointing in the MT is also unique, which is intentional for guiding one’s understanding of its appearance there as the obverse of the great height (**מעלה**). In Am. 9:2, however, Sheol is best understood as the underworld and an extreme locale deep in the earth. This feature of Sheol serves to establish the point of God’s inexorable and inescapable judgment due to his complete divine sovereignty. This is achieved through the irony

of attempting to escape divine wrath and death at his hand (verse 1) by digging into the underworld where the dead already reside, or by ascending the heavens where God resides.

### 3.2.4. Jon. 2:3b

*I cried unto the Lord from my distress, and he answered me. From the belly of Sheol, I cried. You heard my voice.*

In Jon. 2:3b Sheol is part of a unique phrase: מִבֶּטֶן שְׂאוֹל *'from the belly of Sheol'*. This metaphor occurs only in the book of Jonah.<sup>168</sup> It is, of course, appropriate in the context of the narrative, where Jonah is swallowed by the great דג גדול *'great fish'*, but its uniqueness is also pertinent to the issue of how we understand the broader biblical portrayal of Sheol. Ultimately, Jonah is delivered from Sheol, or from the viscera of the fish, which in one way contradicts the classic consensus that, like Hades or the Akkadian underworld, there is no return from Sheol.<sup>169</sup> How significant then is this feature of Sheol, and what is the nature of the fish in relation to Sheol?

Whether literal or parabolic, Jonah's sojourn inside the fish is likely intended to be understood as an actual aspect of Sheol; that is, the viscera of the fish, which carries the real potential for death, corresponds to מִבֶּטֶן שְׂאוֹל. This death potential is also reminiscent of other passages in the psalter, which is perhaps part of the rationale behind the composition of Jonah's psalm in chapter 2.

There are a number of lexical features in chapter 2 that serve the narrative and the overall didactic message, but also help to clarify Jonah's experience of events, and perhaps that of Sheol. First, the verb מִנֵּה occurs in Jonah four times in the piel and carries a range of senses: "distribute, allot,

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<sup>168</sup> Tucker (2006: 51); Stuart (1988: 475-76).

<sup>169</sup> Levenson (2006: ix).

commission, install in office,”<sup>170</sup> “apportion,” “send,”<sup>171</sup> and “appoint, ordain”.<sup>172</sup> God is the subject of the verb in each occurrence in Jonah, and מִנְה in piel is used in the context to express an action performed by the highest authority as the subject of the verb.<sup>173</sup> In the four examples from Jonah, God’s will is expressed through the divine appointment of forces or creatures in nature by way of מִנְה to carry out his purposes. These can be likened to servants appointed or employed for a specific task.<sup>174</sup> Evidently, Jonah has free will, unlike the forces of nature appointed by YHWH who act according to the divine will. While this, of course, supports the traditional Jewish understanding of Jonah being a didactic or pedagogical book about repentance,<sup>175</sup> it also implies that Sheol, which corresponds to the belly of the fish, is subject to YHWH’s authority also.

In 2:1, YHWH appoints (מִנְה) the ‘*great fish*’ to swallow (בִּלְע) Jonah.<sup>176</sup> As we have seen, the verb בִּלְע has a special relationship with death and Sheol (cf. Ex. 15:12; Num. 16:30, 32, 34, and Prov. 1:12) and is often connected to danger or annihilation (cf. Ps. 21:10).<sup>177</sup> Here, the subject of בִּלְע is the great fish. According to Allen (1976: 213), the fish amounts to a “special rescue operation” as a symbol

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<sup>170</sup> TDOT (8: 399).

<sup>171</sup> HALOT: 599.

<sup>172</sup> BDB: 584.

<sup>173</sup> TDOT (8: 399). Cf. Ps. 61:8; Job 7:3; Dan. 1:5, 10, 11. Simon (1999: 18) notes the LXX’s rendering as an injunction (Καὶ προσέταξεν κύριος κήτει μεγάλῳ ‘*and the Lord commanded a great fish/sea monster*’) and compares with Am. 9:3. However, while the content of Am. 9:3 is similar, the verb in the MT is צוה, which is rendered as ἐντέλλομαι in the LXX.

<sup>174</sup> Wolff (1977: 32). Another example of this use of מִנְה might include Dan. 1:5, 10 with the authority being King Nebuchadnezzar who assigns to Daniel and his friends a portion of the King’s delicacies.

<sup>175</sup> Zlotowitz and Scherman (1978: xix-xxii). Jenson (2008: 36) lists the main proposals regarding the meaning of the book as, 1. Prophecy 2. Repentance 3. Universalism 4. Theodicy 5. Sovereignty. Ultimately, Jenson writes that the book of Jonah “can be regarded as an exploration of how the God of Jonah is both the one God of both Jew and gentile and the unique covenant God of Israel, exhibiting in both modes his justice and compassion”. Issues of covenant faithfulness, grace, Israel and gentiles, God’s universal care for all, including animals, are all aspects of the book. However, the traditional understanding seems to reflect the more salient aspects of the divine will versus Jonah’s will and human free will, in contrast with the appointed forces of nature that obey the divine command.

<sup>176</sup> Sasson (1990: 149) notes that the LXX’s κῆτος is an unspecified aquatic animal that gets progressively larger “if we follow its attestations chronologically... from Homer’s “seal” to Pliny’s “whale””.

<sup>177</sup> Wolff (1977: 132).

of God's graciousness lifting Jonah out of the depths to a new life.<sup>178</sup> However, the fish is initially appointed for Jonah's destruction, which, in the divine appointment of the fish and its swallowing of Jonah, highlights the link with the belly of Sheol in 2:3.

It is important to note that the narrative makes a linguistic distinction between the belly or viscera of the fish (בִּטֵּן) in 2:1, and the belly or womb of Sheol (בִּטֵּן) in 2:3. Both nouns, however, denote the place of Jonah's sojourn. This difference may be purely anaphoric, but בִּטֵּן may also be strictly part of the narrative, whereas בִּטֵּן is poetical.

The use of בִּטֵּן to characterize the interior of Sheol, or perhaps the experience of Sheol, is appropriately used here to liken the stomach of the fish with the underworld and implicitly death. However, from the narrative, it is apparent that the author's intent is that the great fish is to be understood as an actual existing creature, and Jonah's sojourn in the viscera of the beast as the prophet's literal reality. The inclusion of 2:3b and Sheol is therefore somewhat problematic, as the metaphor might detract from the supposed reality of the narrative. Conversely, there are other passages, apart from the wider context of the Jonah narrative, alluding to a connection between the underworld and the sea or the waters under the earth. In this way, the great fish, related to the earlier creation myths, may be viewed as a primordial figure residing in the underworld or the great deep/abyss and perhaps even ruling it. This could align Sheol more closely with Hades and further explicate the use of Hades to translate Sheol, without necessarily constituting an early Israelite belief in an underworld deity.

With that being said, further underworld connections are to be viewed in Jonah's psalm, especially 2:7. Sheol is not mentioned directly in 2:7 but the underworld connection is unmistakable. First, there is the common descent verb יָרַד.<sup>179</sup> Second, the phrase *'whose bars closed behind me*

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<sup>178</sup> So also Limburg (1993: 60); Simundson (2005: 270); Cary (2008: 76).

<sup>179</sup> In his discussion on the use of repetition of certain verbs, Magonet (1983: 17) suggests that the use of יָרַד, especially in the description of Jonah's descent to the bottom of the sea in 2:7, may be viewed as adding a

*forever*’ is reminiscent of Job 17:16 where Job refers to his hope itself as descending into Sheol: *Will it sink to the bars of Sheol? Will we descend together unto the dust?*

There appears to be another possible thematic connection with Job where we find the word for ‘bars’ in Jon. 2:7 also used at Job 38:8-11 in God’s description of His barring and stopping up the sea waters and prescribing its limits:

**Job 38:8** - *“Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb,  
9 when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band,  
10 and prescribed limits for it and set bars (בַּרְיִחַ) and doors,  
11 and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed’?”*

If it can be said that there is a definite connection here with Jon. 2:7, this passage in Job is then especially important for our understanding of Sheol and perhaps also its role in primordial events and the early Israelite cosmological worldview.

Finally, the description of Jonah’s ordeal in the viscera of the great fish and the brink of Sheol is something like a near death experience. Aside from the narrative details of being swallowed by the fish, which appear to be intended as literal, the details of Jonah’s descent in the psalm may then read as a figurative description of his spiritual descent into Sheol. In this way, the figurative expression of the bars that close behind him forever in 2:7 is perhaps the psalmodic equivalent of the jaws of the fish. In other words, the difference between the viscera of the fish and belly of Sheol is that one is part of the narrative and the other is part of the psalm. We may, therefore, think of the fish and Sheol as thematically coequal. Both function as the place of Jonah’s sojourn and both hold the potential of his actual death. The fish *is* Sheol for Jonah. It is not initially a rescue operation, as some scholars suggest,

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spiritual dimension to the passage. He notes also the three occurrences of יָרַד in chapter 1, where Jonah descends or goes down first to Jaffa, then down to board the ship, and finally into the innermost part of the ship. Magonet sees this as part of “a continuing act of “descent” by Jonah”.

but the intended agent of Jonah's demise for his disobedience. However, Jonah repents and this results in his deliverance from the belly of the fish, or Sheol. In this way, the fish that was initially the agent of Jonah's death and destruction becomes the vessel that saves him from drowning.

### 3.2.5. Hab. 2:5

*And moreover, the wine is treacherous, an arrogant man, and he does not remain  
He opens wide his throat, like Sheol, and he is like Death - and never satisfied.  
He gathers to himself all the nations, and collects for himself all peoples.*

Hab. 2:4-5 forms part of a description of a Chaldean ruler.<sup>180</sup> The passage also presents some difficulties in translation and interpretation, especially 5a. The textual issues here have been covered extensively by many scholars, most notably Emerton's thorough analysis (1977). For our purpose, the significance of Sheol in the passage derives from its relation to other Sheol passages, where the underworld is described as an insatiable monster swallowing its victims. In particular, the language recalls that of Isa. 5:14 and Prov. 1:12, but also Num. 16:30-33.

The reference to a consuming underworld has, of course, led some scholars to view here the mythological provenance of Mot (see KTU 1.5.ii.2-4). Certainly, the expanded clause, which includes כְּמוֹת *'and he is like death'*, along with the theme of death's insatiability, readily relates to the Canaanite mythology. As we have seen, this mythological connection has been viewed elsewhere, especially in Num. 16:30-33. There, however, the connection with Mot is negated by the fact that the בְּרִיאָה is a new creation of God, where the supernatural orifice in the earth is given not to Mot but to Sheol. In this way, even if details such as swallowing (בִּלְעַ) ostensibly allude to what is known of Mot as a devouring monster, the intended function and meaning of the hapax בְּרִיאָה is as something new,

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<sup>180</sup> Emerton (1977: 4).

unprecedented, and unheard of amongst the Israelites. In Hab. 2:5, on the other hand, the allusion to Mot may be more pronounced and deliberate.

The textual difficulties of Hab. 2:5 notwithstanding, several hermeneutical possibilities exist here. The initial phrase in 5a, *וַאֲנִי כִּי־הֵיִין* ‘*And moreover, the wine*’,<sup>181</sup> appears to refer to a Chaldean king according to the context, especially 5c and the allusion to a conqueror. Andersen (2001: 217) argues that *וַאֲנִי* provides continuity between verses 4 and 5.<sup>182</sup> Further continuity between verses 4 and 5 may be possible if the hapax pual 3<sup>rd</sup> fem. sing. perfect of *עָפַל* at 4a is taken to refer to the Babylonian oppressor’s soul; that is, *נִפְשׁ*, being feminine, is here the subject of *עָפַל*, which refers to the king’s soul or identity being swollen or puffed up with hubris. For example,<sup>4</sup> ‘*Behold! His soul is swollen. It is not right within him; but a righteous man, in his faithfulness, will live.*’<sup>5</sup> *And moreover, the wine...*’ etc.

For the reference to Sheol in 5b (*הִרְחִיב כְּשֵׂאוֹל נִפְשׁוֹ* ‘*He opens wide his throat, like Sheol*’), the language readily recalls Isa. 5:14. There, the 3<sup>rd</sup> fem. sing. hiphil of *רָחַב* refers to Sheol, which itself is of course feminine. Here, the 3<sup>rd</sup> masc. sing. form refers directly to *הֵיִין*, which is then compared to Sheol and death (*כְּמֹוֹת - כְּשֵׂאוֹל*). However, the poetic description in the context refers to a Babylonian king. Like Isa. 5:14, *נִפְשׁוֹ* in the LXX is rendered with *ψυχῆν*, but likely refers to the throat or gullet, which is the preferred rendering in this context also.<sup>183</sup>

Much has been made of the insatiability of death and the possible allusion to the god Mot. Hays (2015: 179) sees Hab. 2:5, along with Isa. 5:14, as a personification of death and a reference to the

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<sup>181</sup> LXX: ὁ δὲ κατοινωμένος ‘*but the one who is drunk*’. Some scholars question the LXX’s interpretation of *הֵיִין* as reflecting a different Hebrew text, but this seems unnecessary. The LXX’s *κατοινωμένος*, as an interpretation of *וַאֲנִי כִּי־הֵיִין*, is clearly a relatable expression. In particular, see the discussions of the issue by Emerton (1977: 1-9) and Ziegler (1952: 366-70). Cf. also Jer. 25:15.

<sup>182</sup> So also Emerton (1977: 1-3).

<sup>183</sup> HALOT: 711; DCH: 724-25. See footnote at Isa. 5:14.

“swallowing god of Death”, and translates **והוא כמוֹת ולא ישבע** in 5b as ‘*and is as insatiable as Mot*’.

Apart from those aspects that relate to the mythology of swallowing Mot, the possibility that this could be a direct reference to the Canaanite deity may also be supported by the context of idolatry. Day (1989: 61), for example, sees **שִׁקְרָה** in verse 18 as a reference to a pagan deity.<sup>184</sup>

Certainly, it appears that there are clear thematic connections with Mot, especially between the throat or gullet (**נִפְשׁוֹ**) of Sheol and the throat of Mot. However, one must still be mindful of the metaphor. In Ugaritic literature, *npš* refers to the throat or gullet of Mot, whereas here, and elsewhere in biblical literature, as Tromp notes (1969: 105n), it is Sheol rather than death that opens its gullet wide to consume its victims.<sup>185</sup> Of course, Sheol is often synonymous with death in the HB but the distinction is important, as death and Sheol are not properly interchangeable. **מָוֶת**, for instance, does not function as a Sheol synonym in the HB. Hab. 2:5 as a direct reference to Mot himself seems to embroider the passage with emphasis on the deity, which subtly detracts from the figurative aspects of the text. Hays’ translation wants to include the foreign deity directly, but why should this be necessary here? Rather, the Babylonian king with his insatiability and greed is merely likened metaphorically to death and Sheol. This is not to say that the foreign deity is not being alluded to here, but the mythological connection is only secondary and certainly not indispensable. This is made clear from the final phrase in 5c, which elucidates the metaphor and directly describes the king’s desire to subdue and conquer the world:

**וַיֵּאסֶף אֱלֹהֵי כָל־הַגּוֹיִם וַיִּקְבֹּץ אֱלֹהֵי כָל־הָעַמִּים**

*‘And he gathers to himself all the nations, and collects for himself all peoples’*

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<sup>184</sup> Day further compares its use in other passages: Isa. 44:20, 57:4; Jer. 3:23, 10:14 [= 51:17], 13:25. 16:19 that he believes are references to a pagan deity.

<sup>185</sup> See Tromp (1969: 23-46). Tromp also cites Ex. 15:12, Num. 16:30ff, and Ps. 106:17 for the converse, but this is only feasible if his conviction that **אֶרֶץ** regularly connotes the underworld can be convincingly established. See also, Johnston (2002: 99-114).

Furthermore, נפש is directly aligned here with Sheol and less so גִּוְהַת, and nor can it be said that Sheol is here divinized. Surely, it is better to say that the theme of insatiability is an obvious connection with death in the first place, given the certainty of it for all living beings. Additionally, the verbs present are 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine singular, and therefore must refer to the king of Babylon, which underscores the metaphor. Sheol in Hab. 2:5 then, is the insatiable underworld of the dead. Rather than being a direct reference or allusion to the Canaanite Mot, the language relates perfectly well with other Sheol texts bearing the theme of the greediness of death and the underworld.

### 3.3. SUMMARY

As we have seen, Sheol in the above prophetic texts functions in a variety of ways with different emphases. Consistently, however, the concept of descent thereto is viewed throughout and it is also roundly negative. Sheol is frequently aligned with evildoers and traitors (1 Kgs 2:6, 9; Isa. 5:14), enemies (Isa. 14:9, 11, 15, 38:10, 18; Hab. 2:5), idolatry (Isa. 28:15, 18, 57:9), sickness (Isa. 38:10, 18), divine judgment and exile (Hos. 13:14; Jon. 2:3; Am. 9:2). As with the examples from the Torah, defining Sheol with any real uniformity is problematic, as Sheol's multivalency facilitates a more diversified application of the term. This is especially clear with its abstract use in Isa. 7:11. Finally, in 1 Sam. 2:6, YHWH's authority over life and death and his power to raise up from Sheol is positively affirmed as a real possibility, even if it has not literally happened.

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## SHEOL IN THE PSALMS

### 4.1. PSALMS

In the book of Psalms, there are sixteen occurrences of Sheol in fourteen psalms, with three occurrences in Ps. 49. The portrayal of Sheol in the psalms is consistently negative and aligned with the psalmist's enemies, the unrighteous, and various afflictions. Often the underworld appears as part of a petition to be liberated from it, but here it is likely a desire of the psalmist to return to everyday life from some adverse condition or life-threatening situation rather than being evidence of hope for an afterlife.<sup>186</sup> The hope for continued and unbroken communion with YHWH, however, is also a featured theme, and one that appears in non-Sheol psalms also.

With that being said, the topic of death and the underworld in the Psalms, along with the associated themes of immortality and the afterlife, is a considerable task that cannot be adequately covered in this thesis. What follows then is an overview of Sheol in the Psalms.

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<sup>186</sup> Gunkel (1998: 132).

#### 4.1.1. Ps. 6:6

*For in death your memory is nought. In Sheol, who will give thanks to you?*

Structurally, verse 6 arrives exactly in the middle of Ps. 6 with five preceding verses (including the superscription or title verse) and five succeeding verses. Given that this psalm is a prayer for deliverance and healing, whether physical, psychological or spiritual, the placement of Sheol in verse 6 might be viewed as something of an apex or pivot point that leads into the final part of the psalm where YHWH has heard the psalmist's petition and prayer (verses 9-10). Verse 6 is formed by a statement about the state of death followed by a rhetorical question. When dead, nothing is known or remembered and, because death is death, the psalmist will no longer enjoy any communion with YHWH or be able to give thanks (cf. Isa. 38:18; Pss. 30:10; 88:6; 115:17).<sup>187</sup>

Craigie (1983: 89-90) and Dahood (1966: 38) understand Ps. 6 as a prayer for healing from sickness or disease. However, physical illness is not entirely clear, as the psalmist does not clarify what the nature of the ailment might be. In verse 2, the psalmist pleads with YHWH: '*do not in your anger rebuke me; do not in your wrath discipline me*'. This suggests that the psalmist's healing here includes forgiveness and restoration to right relationship with God. Elsewhere, God's healing may include a victory over one's foes, as well as physical healing. For instance, in Ps. 30:3, God heals the psalmist (וְהִתְרַפְּאֵנִי), but according to verse 2, his enemies have no occasion to rejoice over him, which may also suggest healing from psychological or emotional distress. The subsequent description in Ps.

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<sup>187</sup> The LXX understands הִתְרַפְּאֵנִי in Ps. 6:6 as ἐξομολογήσεται (ἐξομολογέω) 'confess' or 'profess' (BDAG: 351). However, the LXX in 2 Sam. 22:50 (also Ps. 17:50/18:50 (MT)), 1 Chron. 29:13, Ps. 85:12 (MT 86:12), and Ps. 117:28 (MT 118:28) makes use of ἐξομολογέω chiefly for הִתְרַפְּאֵנִי in the sense of 'giving thanks'. In the case of 1 Chron. 29:13, ἐξομολογέω is used for הִתְרַפְּאֵנִי, whereas αἰνέω 'praise' (BDAG: 27) is used for הַלֵּל, thus drawing the distinction between giving thanks and praise. This is comparable with the sentiment in Eccl. 9:4, where it is better to be alive than dead, as even the lowliest forms of life have hope for the blessings that come with life and can give thanks.

30:3-4 of deliverance from Sheol thus appears to be a figurative way of describing deliverance from his enemies. Here, however, in 6:3-4 the psalmist describes his condition as one of feebleness and distress: *אני אמלל* ‘*I am feeble*’; *נבהלו עצמי* ‘*my bones are dismayed*’; and *ונפשי נבהלה מאד* ‘*my soul is very distressed*’. In this way, physical illness may be part of the overall healing, but the text seems to emphasize mental distress.<sup>188</sup>

The adjective *אמלל* ‘*feeble*’ appears only here and at Neh. 3:34 in Sanballat’s remarks against the Jews, implying that they are weak and incapable of accomplishing the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. It is derived from the verbal root *אמל* ‘be weak, languish’, which itself has a range of meanings relating to weakness more generally.<sup>189</sup> The LXX translates *אמלל* in Ps. 6:3 as *ἀσθενής* ‘weak, powerless’, which likewise may refer to weakness or feebleness in a variety of forms.<sup>190</sup> It is not necessary then for *אמלל* to be understood in terms of feebleness from bodily disease or illness, though this meaning is, of course, closely related.

The two niph'al forms of *בהל* ‘be disturbed, dismayed, terrified’<sup>191</sup> in verses 3-4, describe the psalmist’s severe level of terror and distress. Later in verse 11, it is the psalmist’s enemies who are put to shame and dismayed (*יבשו ויבהלו מאד כל-איבי*). In light of this, while the qal imperative *רפאני* “heal me” might imply that the psalmist requires a physical ailment to be healed, it does not preclude its use figuratively as a petition for healing from psychological or spiritual distress in the face of annihilation from his enemies. This, of course, includes the hope of restoration to YHWH’s good favour.

In Ps. 6:6, death and Sheol represent the ultimate exile and the complete cessation of life, where there is no cognizance, activity or communion with YHWH (cf. Eccl. 9:10). It is a separation from

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<sup>188</sup> For healing from emotional distress, cf. Ps. 147:3; Job 13:4; Jer. 15:18, 17:14.

<sup>189</sup> Williamson (1985: 216); BDB: 51.

<sup>190</sup> BDAG: 142.

<sup>191</sup> BDB: 96.

community and God,<sup>192</sup> and this is the crux of the psalmist's reasoning and plea to God for healing and deliverance. The function of Sheol, however, appears to be less literal and more figurative; actual death is a potentiality but not yet a reality for the psalmist. The nature of the psalmist's ailment or vexation is ambiguous with regard to physical illness. The threat of non-existence, however, due to the danger of his enemies claiming victory over him and losing YHWH's favour, is what appears to precipitate his extreme mental distress. Given the finality of death in Ps. 6, the otherworldly underworld is less prominent here than the potential of death and annihilation in a temporal, real-world sense. In verses 9-11, we learn that YHWH has heard the psalmist's prayer and that the terror and hopelessness he experiences is then reflected back on his enemies. In this way, this version of Sheol is an example of deliverance from the brink of death. The psalmist's ultimate death and descent into Sheol or the grave is not mentioned or alluded to. That being said, there is little in this occurrence that necessitates an understanding of Sheol as the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek Hades or other underworlds from the ancient Near East, but nor is this denied. Sheol, rather, is synonymous with death itself, but is likely also the adverse situation the psalmist finds himself in; Sheol is death, or the potential of it, but also a state of extreme mental and emotional distress, where there is a very real threat of being cut off from YHWH.

#### **4.1.2. Ps. 9:18**

*The wicked shall be turned to Sheol – all the nations who forget God.*

Whereas in Ps. 6 YHWH is forgotten in death, in Ps. 9 the wicked nations forget YHWH in life and meet their end in Sheol. The fate of the nations in this instance closely resembles the concept of Hell,

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<sup>192</sup> Johnston (2002: 32).

so much so that this prompted its translation as such in the AV, whereas in Ps. 6, the AV glosses Sheol as *'the grave'*. Here in verse 6, the fate of the wicked nations is also spoken of in everlasting terms: *'you have rebuked the nations; you have destroyed the wicked; their name you have blotted out forever and ever (לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד)*'.<sup>193</sup> In verse 7, the enemy has come to everlasting ruins (תּוֹבֵרַת הַצְנָל), and again, the very memory of them has perished (אֲבַד זִכְרָם הַמָּה). The obverse of this (verse 19) is that the people of God, the needy, the afflicted and the poor, are remembered forever: *'for the needy will not be forgotten forever (לֹא נִשְׁכַּח יְשֻׁכָה)*; *the hope of the poor will not perish forever (לֹא תֵאָבֵד לְעַד)*'.

Regarding those who forget God, Kraus (1988: 196) interprets Sheol as “the realm of separation from God beyond Yahweh’s area of lordship”. He finds support for this idea in Ps. 10:16, as he reads these two psalms together. Better support for this interpretation would come from Pss. 88:11-13 and 115:17. However, this becomes problematic in light of the Sheol passages that affirm YHWH’s jurisdiction and perfect knowledge of the underworld, such as Deut. 32:22, Job 26:6 and Prov. 15:11. Rather, forgetting God and being forgotten is a theme in this psalm that need not be taken as definitive regarding the nature of the underworld.

Dahood (1966: 58) sees a connection here with Ps. 139:15: רָקְמָתִי בַתְּהַיּוֹת אֲרֶץ *'woven in the depths of the earth'*, where he understands אֲרֶץ as denoting the underworld. However, this connection with Ps. 139:15 is problematic. While biblically and naturally, all humans have been created in the same way, and from the dust according to Gen. 2:7, in Ps. 139:15, the psalmist speaks only of himself. Furthermore, where the psalmist describes his own creation, he begins in verse 13 stating that God has knit him together in his mother’s womb (תִּסְכְּנֵנִי בַבֶּטֶן אִמִּי). In this way, the divine creative act of weaving in the depths of the earth in verse 15 is a metaphor for the more natural formation of a human being in verse 13.<sup>194</sup> Therefore, as Ps. 139 has its own interpretive issues, 139:15 is not instructive here

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<sup>193</sup> The LXX is even more emphatic: εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος *'forever and forever and ever'* (NETS).

<sup>194</sup> Allen (2002: 329).

and ארץ need not be construed as the underworld in that passage.

Concerning the *turning* of the wicked into Sheol, Dahood (1966: 58) sees an allusion to Gen. 3:19 here: אֶל-הָאָרֶץ עַד שׁוֹבֵךְ 'until you return to the earth'. Likewise, Craigie (1983: 116) notes Gen. 3:19 and turning to Sheol as analogous to a return to the dust. The problem with this is that Gen. 3:19 refers to all humanity, whereas Ps. 9 draws a clear distinction between the fates of the wicked and the righteous. Is the turning or return to Sheol a return to the dust for the wicked as in Gen. 3:19? If so, then the opposite appears to be true for the people of God, which perhaps constitutes an afterlife for the righteous. What is the nature of their afterlife then?

In Ps. 9, it is difficult to view Sheol merely as the common grave for all humankind both righteous and wicked, or as the equivalent of Hades and general place of the dead, as the distinction between the wicked nations and the people of God is unavoidable. Rather, given the language of perpetuity and the dichotomy between the righteous and wicked, Sheol in verse 18 arguably takes on greater theological significance. But does this necessarily envisage a true afterlife? As mentioned, forgetting God and being forgotten is a theme in this psalm. In Gen. 3:19 the return to dust is the end for all humans, both righteous and wicked. The clear distinction between the fates of the righteous and wicked in Ps. 9 seems best understood as being remembered or forgotten in death. The allusion to Genesis, therefore, is not instructive. It is important to mention that it would be a mistake to read this reference as an early reference to the concept of Hell, but the possible influence on the development of Hell is certainly plausible. The wicked are those who forget God (cf. Ps. 50:22) and the implied fate for them is that they are forgotten in Sheol. To be remembered (verse 19) may then constitute a kind of afterlife for the righteous. This does not preclude ultimate death, burial and perhaps also the underworld for the righteous, Sheol is not an appropriate term for describing their end.

### 4.1.3. Ps. 16:10<sup>195</sup>

*For you will not abandon my life to Sheol; you will not allow your faithful one to see the pit.*

Understanding the meaning and function of Sheol in Ps. 16 greatly depends on how we understand its synonym *שְׁחַת* and the noun *נֶפֶשׁ*.<sup>196</sup>

First, there are five occurrences of *שְׁחַת* in the Psalter that variously describe the underworld or grave: 16:10, 30:10, 49:10, 55:24, and 103:4.<sup>197</sup> With each of these five occurrences, the LXX understands *שְׁחַת* as *διαφθορά* “breakdown of organic matter, *dissolution, deterioration, corruption*”.<sup>198</sup> However, while the above examples of *שְׁחַת* are synonymous with Sheol, only Ps. 16:10 contains a direct parallel with Sheol. Furthermore, Ps. 103 is the only psalm out of this group that does not contain an occurrence of Sheol.

As a parallel with Sheol, to infer that *שְׁחַת* denotes a pit, according to its primary meaning, and by extension the grave, is logical. The LXX’s understanding of *שְׁחַת* as ‘*corruption*’, or more precisely decay and the decomposition of the flesh in the grave, is also worth noting, as this may clarify our understanding of the use of *נֶפֶשׁ* here.<sup>199</sup>

The term *נֶפֶשׁ* functions in a variety of ways throughout the HB. For example: as a corpse (Lev. 22:4; Num. 5:2, 6:6, 11, 9:7, 10); a living creature (Gen. 1:20ff; Lev. 11:10, 46; Ezek. 47:9); a person or people (Gen. 12:5; 46:18ff; 2 Kgs 12:5; Prov. 28:25; Jer. 52:29-30; Ezek. 13:19); as one’s throat or

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<sup>195</sup> 4QPs<sup>c</sup>, Frag. 1, 16:7-10.

<sup>196</sup> Dahood (1966: 91) does not comment on Sheol or *שְׁחַת* in verse 10 but understands the psalmist as expressing the belief that he will be accorded the same privileged afterlife or immortality as Enoch and Elijah.

<sup>197</sup> BDB: 1001.

<sup>198</sup> BDAG: 1054.

<sup>199</sup> LXX: *ψυχή* “(breath of) life, life-principle, soul”. BDAG: 1098.

gullet (Isa. 5:14; Jon. 2:6; Hab. 2:5; Ps 69:2), as one's mind (1 Sam. 2:35; Eccl. 7:28); and also as a disembodied entity (Gen. 35:18; 1 Kgs 17:22). As the parallel with *הסידך* 'your faithful one', *נפש* here may refer to the individual's life more broadly. Is it possible that *נפש* might also refer to the psalmist's inner life, mind or soul in the spiritual sense? If so, Sheol and *שחת* would still function as death and the grave, albeit more spiritualised. *נפש* may also refer to the psalmist's corpse that sees corruption in the grave, which is perhaps further clarified as such by the LXX's rendering of *שחת* as *διαφθορά*. This, of course, would allow for later interpreters to view a possible hint of resurrection or an afterlife here, especially in light of verse 11.

In verse 11, the psalmist continues to describe the faithfulness and rewards of God where he is shown the path of life (*ארה היים*) and then finishes with the phrase *נצח בימינך נצח* 'At your right hand are pleasures forever'.<sup>200</sup> These verses seem to describe a state of salvation where God's right hand might constitute an afterlife for the psalmist, especially in continued communion with YHWH.<sup>201</sup> If this is so, then in a similar manner to Ps. 9, it might be appropriate to view Sheol as truly denoting an otherworldly place of the dead but an underworld wherein God's faithful ones do not reside in the same way or see corruption.

Kraus (1988: 240) asserts that, in light of the prayer for protection in verse 1, Ps. 16 does not deal either with resurrection or immortality, but with rescue from imminent death. Kraus also highlights God's counsel and the "way of life" in verses 7 and 11, and states that the rescue from death in verses 9-10 does not differ from other deliverance psalms. As Johnston (1995: 214) notes, this is

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<sup>200</sup> Dahood (1966: 91) translates *ארה היים* as "path of life eternal" stating that within this context *היים* denotes eternal life. He further cites KTU 1.17.27-29. In this text, however, there is no equivalent phrase describing a path leading to eternal life: "Ask for eternal life and I will give it to you, immortality and I will bestow it upon you (presumably Dahood's translation)". His subsequent link with Prov. 12:28 is far more instructive.

<sup>201</sup> The interpretation of Ps. 16:10 as an affirmation of resurrection in light of Jesus' resurrection is, of course, well-known (Acts 2:31; 13:35f). For a brief history of interpretation of Ps. 16, see Kraus (1988: 239-40).

the position of modern scholarship generally. Johnston (221) also highlights the fact that no obverse is given in Ps. 16 for death and שְׁחַת, save the presence and blessings of YHWH forevermore. Certainly, Sheol and שְׁחַת function here as an undesirable fate from which the psalmist hopes and believes he will be spared. If his salvation or deliverance is not intended to be understood as a post-mortem destiny for himself and the righteous generally, then it is not a large leap from what is written to how the psalm was later interpreted.

#### 4.1.4. Ps. 18:6<sup>202</sup>

*The cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me*

Ps. 18 appears also in 2 Sam. 22 with some textual variations. The occurrence of Sheol in Ps. 18 falls into the deliverance category where the psalmist describes being rescued from the brink of death and Sheol, which according to the title verse, is at the hand of his enemies and the hand of Saul.

In verses 2-4, the psalmist praises YHWH for his deliverance and salvation and then describes the nature of the threat to his life in verses 5-6. Between Ps. 18 and 2 Sam. 22, the construct nouns ascribed to death and Sheol differ. In Ps. 18 we have מוֹת חַבְלֵי ‘cords of death’ in verse 5 corresponding to שְׁאוֹל חַבְלֵי ‘cords of Sheol’ in verse 6. However, in 2 Sam. 22:5, we have מַשְׁבְּרֵי מוֹת ‘breakers/waves of death’, but no variation for Sheol in verse 6.<sup>203</sup> Craigie (1983: 169) notes that the repetition of חַבְלֵי makes phonetic sense as the sound creates an echo with נַחְלֵי ‘torrents’. That being said, the version in 2 Sam. 22:5-6 arguably makes better sense thematically, as מַשְׁבְּרֵי parallels נַחְלֵי

<sup>202</sup> 4QPs<sup>c</sup>, Frags. 3-4 col. i, 18:1-14.

<sup>203</sup> The LXX follows the repetition in Ps. 18:5-6 (Ps. 17:5-6 in the LXX) with ὠδῖνες θανάτου ‘pangs of death’ and ὠδῖνες ἕδου ‘pangs of Hades’. In 2 Sam. 22:5-6, however, the LXX omits Sheol and instead repeats θάνατος: συντριμμοὶ θανάτου ‘troubles of death’ in verse 5, and ὠδῖνες θανάτου ‘pangs of death’ in verse 6.

in verse 5, and חבלי parallels מוקשי in verse 6. In 2 Sam. 22, there may also be something of a phonetic chiasm: מוקשי - חבלי - נחלי - משרי.

Structurally, a couplet is formed between verses 5 and 6 with some noticeable patterns. In both Ps. 18 and 2 Sam. 22, there is a *qal – piel – qal – piel* pattern where the verbs either begin or end each of the four lines (5a – 5b and 6a – 6b). In 5a the line begins with a *qal* perfect 3rd common plural of אפפוני and ends in 5b with an imperfect *piel* 3rd masculine plural of יבעתוני. In 6a the structure is reversed and the line ends with a *qal* perfect 3rd common plural of סבבוני and begins in 6b with a *piel* perfect 3rd common plural of קדמוני. In this way, another possible chiasm might be seen here if בליעל is to be linked with Sheol:<sup>204</sup>

A – 5a: *The chords of* מות

B – 5b: *The torrents of* בליעל

B<sup>2</sup> – 6a: *The chords of* שאול

A<sup>2</sup> – 6b: *The snares of* מות

The appearance of בליעל as Sheol's parallel is worth noting. בליעל occurs 27 times in the HB and may be linked with Sheol for its association with wickedness and worthlessness elsewhere.<sup>205</sup> The term also has its own etymological issues. Dahood's (1966: 105) emphasis on the connection with ancient Canaanite myth, and the motif of death and the netherworld engorging or swallowing the dead, finds a preference for בלע 'swallow' as the verbal root. However, בליעל in its biblical context does not exhibit any obvious connection to בלע. Another theory noted by Thomas and Emerton, though not

<sup>204</sup> See BDB: 116. For a comprehensive study of בליעל, see also Johnston (1993: 23-26).

<sup>205</sup> See, for example, Deut. 13:14; 1 Sam. 25:25; 2 Sam. 16:7, 20:1; Job 34:18; Prov. 6:12.

accepted by either scholar, is that בליעל is a compound noun consisting of the negative particle with an apocopated imperfect of עלה, giving us the meaning of ‘he will not come up’.<sup>206</sup> This, of course, fits nicely with other Sheol passages such as Job 7:9. However, like Dahood’s etymology, this does not readily connect with its frequent biblical function of describing worthless and wicked people. Johnston (1993: 26) views בליעל as a rare epithet for the underworld due to its association with chaos and destruction. However, he agrees with Emerton (1987: 216) who suggests that בליעל describes the evil character of people as opposed to their coming fate and concludes that בליעל is not primarily an underworld term. That being said, the etymology of בליעל, like Sheol, is uncertain.

In Ps. 18, and 2 Sam. 22, Sheol is synonymous with defeat and death posed by David’s enemies. Similarly, in light of the above, בליעל is to be identified with Saul and his cohort as worthless and wicked men, which also finds support from the superscription. Like בליעל, Sheol is an appropriate term for what the psalmist is describing as a bad death at the hands of his enemies.

#### 4.1.5. Ps. 30:4

*O Lord, you have brought up my life from Sheol; you have restored me to life from among those who descend into the pit.*

Ps. 30 is a deliverance psalm and one where the psalmist praises YHWH for deliverance from his enemies. Here, Sheol functions, not as a literal state of death and residence in the underworld, as if the psalmist had literally been there in death, but as an adverse state where the psalmist’s life has been at risk; that is, the psalmist is described as having been delivered or rescued therefrom, where Sheol represents a liminal state or the potential of death. That is not to say that Sheol is not also the state of

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<sup>206</sup> Emerton (1987: 109).

actual death, but it is the mention of Sheol itself that brings the nature of his adverse circumstances into focus.

The theme of deliverance from enemies is made clear in verse 2b: *וְלֹא שִׂמְחַת אֵיבֵי לִי* ‘*and you did not gladden my enemies concerning me*’. This is preceded by the phrase *כִּי דִלִּיתָנִי* ‘*for you have drawn me up*’,<sup>207</sup> which correlates with 4a: *הֵעֲלִית מִן־שְׂאוֹל נַפְשִׁי* ‘*you have brought up my soul from Sheol*’.<sup>208</sup> Verse 4 is thus a figurative way of describing the psalmist’s deliverance from his enemies.<sup>209</sup> In this way, *נִפְּשׁ* followed by *חַיִּיתָנִי* ‘*you have restored me to life*’ in 4b, may indicate that the psalmist’s sense of vitality, life and even spiritual vigour, has been restored after experiencing extreme mental anguish and distress by the threat of death at the hands of his enemies.

Interestingly, the parallel in 4b sees the psalmist as being restored *from* those who descend into the pit of Sheol. As we have seen, the phrase *יֹרְדֵי־בֹר* ‘*those who descend into the pit*’ is synonymous with Sheol. However, in all sixteen biblical occurrences, it refers to the unrighteous descendents from whom the psalmist wishes to be set apart from. If Sheol is the shared fate of all, then implicitly the manner in which the unrighteous descend is distinguished from the manner in which the righteous descend. As mentioned, in verse 2 the psalmist states that he has been *drawn up* with the same verb used to draw water from a well. In this way, *בֹּר* may take on the meaning of a dungeon or prison; specifically, a pit without water that is used as a prison (cf. Jer. 37:16, 38:6; Zech. 9:11; Gen. 37:24; Is. 24:22; Lam. 3:53, 55).<sup>210</sup> Sheol may then be construed as the ultimate prison in other passages. The

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<sup>207</sup> LXX: ὅτι ὑπέλαβές με ‘*because you upheld me*’. *דִּלֵּה* ‘*draw up/out*’, is the only biblical occurrence in piel. Here, the verb is analogous to YHWH’s deliverance of the psalmist from Sheol. The other four biblical occurrences of *דִּלֵּה* are in qal (cf. Ex. 2:16, 19; Prov. 20:5, 26:7).

<sup>208</sup> LXX: ἀνήγαγες ἐξ ᾗδου τὴν ψυχὴν μου ‘*you brought up my soul from Hades*’. *מִן* plus *שְׂאוֹל* occurs in Ps. 86:13, Job 11:8, Prov. 15:24 and 23:14, but this is the only instance where the preposition displays the full spelling.

<sup>209</sup> Nine of the ten Davidic psalms containing Sheol refer to deliverance from enemies: Ps. 6, 9, 18, 30, 31, 55, 86, 139, and 141.

<sup>210</sup> See analysis at 7:1 ii). Note also the LXX: ἔσωσάς με ἀπὸ τῶν καταβαινόντων εἰς λάκκον ‘*you preserved me from among those who go down into the prison/cistern*’.

connection with a dug out pit might also be the reason that Sheol's synonyms are words for pit, trap, prison and destruction.

In addition to verse 4, verse 10 displays further underworld details. There we have two Sheol synonyms: שְׁחַת 'pit' and עֶפֶר 'dust'.<sup>211</sup> In 10a, the psalmist expresses a desire for continued communion with YHWH in his rhetorical question regarding the futility of his death. In this instance, שְׁחַת stands for Sheol in the synonymous phrase אֶל שְׁחַת בְּרַדְתִּי 'in my going down to the pit'. The second rhetorical question in 10b ostensibly employs עֶפֶר as a metonym for the dead. Those who are dead have returned to the dust (Gen. 3:19) and cannot praise YHWH (Isa. 38:18; Pss. 6:6, 88:10, 115:17).

The psalmist's statement of being brought up from Sheol in 4a is so direct and unambiguously describing a deliverance *from* the underworld or grave (בִּין-שְׁאוֹל) that, for the psalmist, this has in some way actually happened. Though 4a is a figurative expression, the psalmist's distress at the threat of his enemies equates to a liminal state of adversity that is perceived, felt and described as Sheol itself. The phrase יִרְדְּי־בֹר 'those who descend into the pit', as we have seen, is a phrase that seems to be exclusively aligned with the wicked. In the context of restoration to life from this group, the phrase in Ps. 30:4b may indicate that the psalmist has been restored to life and YHWH's good favour. Sheol, in this instance, thus constitutes the fate of the wicked and the enemies of the psalmist and of YHWH. Sheol is roundly negative and undesirable; it is a destiny that is feared; it is also aligned with the wicked. The threat of Sheol is that of untimely death and separation from YHWH, and in Ps. 30, it is the potential of a premature end at the hand of the psalmist's enemies.

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<sup>211</sup> When referring to the underworld, שְׁחַת is rendered either by θάνατος 'death' (cf. Job 17:14, 33:18, 22, 24, 30) or διαφθορά 'decay, corruption' (cf. Job 33:28; Pss. 9:16, 16:10 [LXX: 15:10]).

#### 4.1.6. Ps. 31:18

*O Lord, let me not be shamed, for I cry out to you! Let the wicked be shamed  
and let them go in silence to Sheol*

In Ps. 31, Sheol is again aligned with the wicked, but it is the wish of the psalmist that the fate he desires to be spared from should be the fate of the wicked. The psalmist calls down judgment, shame, and death on those who do not cry out to God as he does. It is clearly intended as the obverse of prolonged life and intimacy with God.

The issue of shame in 18a may suggest that the psalmist seeks forgiveness from God, or to remain in divine favour. If forgiveness is sought, then verses 11-13 may illuminate the *state* of Sheol from which one is delivered. In verse 11 we read: ‘*my strength fails because of my iniquity*’. In verse 12, the psalmist is a reproach to his adversaries and neighbours. In verse 13, we have the phrase: ‘*I am forgotten from the heart/mind, like one dead*’. Clearly, his miserable state is not literally death and Sheol, but one of extreme adversity, sickness, and mental anguish.

On verse 11, Craigie (1983: 258) prefers the emendation following Symmachus as *בעוני* ‘*my distress*’ rather than the MT’s *בעוונתי* ‘*my iniquity*’. Kraus (1988: 360) also follows this emendation and states that “there is no clue in Psalm 31” for *בעוונתי*. However, *בעוני* may link with the psalmist’s later appeal for mercy in verse 18 based on the condition that he has cried out to YHWH, perhaps in repentance, whereas the wicked have not.<sup>212</sup> Furthermore, in verse 5 the psalmist refers to his iniquities a second time (*עוונתי*). If the MT’s reading as *בעוני* in verse 11 is correct, this would harmonize well with *בוש* ‘*shame*’ in verse 18. Moreover, the psalmist’s wish that the wicked are to be shamed and go in silence to Sheol further supports the reading of *בעוני*.

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<sup>212</sup> Mental distress as the result of one’s iniquities and praying for mercy is a theme found elsewhere in the psalms. Cf. Pss. 6:3, 32:3, 38:4-5.

The phrase *לְשִׂאוֹל יִדְמוּ* ‘*let them go in silence to Sheol*’ is the obverse of the psalmist’s ability to cry out to YHWH. His wish is that they are no longer able to cry out for mercy or forgiveness, but are to be cut off. Here, the LXX omits silence in 31:18 (30:18) and instead translates 18b as, *αἰσχυνθήσαν οἱ ἀσεβεῖς καὶ καταχθείσαν εἰς ᾅδου* ‘*let the ungodly be shamed and brought down to Hades*’. The suggested emendation in BHS for *יִדְמוּ* is *יִיָּרְדוּ*, which would align well with the LXX’s *καταχθείσαν* ‘*be brought down*’. Dahood (1966: 190) also rejects the interpretation of *לְשִׂאוֹל יִדְמוּ* as ‘*go in silence to Sheol*’. He instead reads ‘*hurled into Sheol*’ citing Ex. 15:16.<sup>213</sup> However, while Dahood claims that one is justified in translating Ps. 31:18b and Ex. 15:16a as “hurled” (*ידה* plus enclitic *mem*), one is also certainly justified in taking the root as *דָּמַם*. Silence is not foreign to the concepts of death and the grave.<sup>214</sup> In Ps. 115:17, for example, the connection with silence is especially clear in the phrase *כָּל־יִרְדֵי דוֹמָה* ‘*all those who descend into silence*’. This phrase is, of course, reminiscent of the related underworld phrase *יִוָּרְדוּ־בֹר*. Additionally, it is implicit in Ps. 6:6 that those in Sheol are silenced and unable to praise YHWH: ‘*In Sheol, who will give praise to you?*’.

Sheol in Ps. 31, is not necessarily the underworld for all peoples good and bad alike. The psalmist’s pleas and crying out to God is a deliberate contrast with silence, as the dead do not praise God, nor are they able to plead with him. This lends further support to the interpretation of the phrase *לְשִׂאוֹל יִדְמוּ* in verse 18 as ‘*let them go in silence to Sheol*’. It is the hope and will of the psalmist that the wicked be shamed and sent to Sheol in silence. This hope continues in verse 19: ‘*Let their lying lips be muted – those who speak against the righteous with arrogance in pride and contempt!*’. while there are other silence passages such as Pss. 94:17 and 115:17 that allude to the underworld, Ps. 31:18 is the only passage where Sheol and silence (either the verb *דָּמַם* or the noun *דוֹמָה*) occur in the same

<sup>213</sup> Dahood (1966: 190).

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Pss. 94:17, 115:17; Jer. 48:2. Note also that for Pss. 94:17 and 115:17, the LXX again omits any reference to silence and appears to replace it with Hades.

verse. Regarding Dahood's emendation, there is nothing that necessitates an alternative reading, or even the BHS emendation. The notion of Sheol being a place of silence is consistent with multiple Sheol passages referring to the place of the dead as one of emptiness and inactivity (cf. Job 7:9; Ps. 6:6; Eccl. 9:10), not to mention the phrase כל-יירדי דומה in Ps. 115:17, which the LXX likewise understands as a reference to the underworld.

#### 4.1.7. Ps. 49:15, 16

<sup>15</sup> *Like sheep they are reserved for Sheol; Death will shepherd them, and the upright will rule over them in the morning, and their form will decay. Sheol shall be a dwelling for him.*

<sup>16</sup> *However, God will ransom my soul from the hand of Sheol, for he will take me, selah.*

The structure of Ps. 49 has five main sections or stanzas. Verses 1-5 function as an introduction with the injunction to listen (שמע). Verses 6-10 introduce the concept of ransom (פדוה) for one's life, or soul (נפש) and the emptiness of materialism and earthly wealth. Verses 11-13 detail the reality of death, and here the grave (קבר) is the home of the dead forever (לעולם). Verses 14-16 introduce the notion that Sheol is the fate or way of the foolhardy (כסל). Finally, verses 17-21 return to the reality of the grave.

While the list of "wisdom psalms" varies from scholar to scholar, Ps. 49 may be considered a wisdom psalm.<sup>215</sup> In verses 4-5 there is unmistakable wisdom vocabulary: חכמות (verse 4), מושל and

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<sup>215</sup> Hurvitz (1988: 41). Dell (2004: 451) argues that while the wisdom elements of the psalm are strong, verse 5 provides a musical connection, and therefore a liturgical and cultic connection also.

הידרה (verse 5).<sup>216</sup> The importance of these sapiential elements of Ps. 49 is to be found especially in the connection with Sheol.

Sheol occurs three times in Ps. 49, which is an unusual concentration of the term. This does not happen elsewhere in the psalms. Here, Sheol constitutes the ‘way of foolishness’ (כסל – verse 14), which, as we will see in chapter 6, is reminiscent of various passages in Proverbs.

The state in which the text of Ps. 49 has come down to us presents a number of problems, and scholars have proffered a range of solutions for those sections containing Sheol. First, the phrase in 15a, כצאן לשאול שתו ‘Like sheep they are reserved for Sheol’, is a unique expression in relation to Sheol. A difficulty arises from how we might understand כצאן ‘Like sheep’, along with the 3<sup>rd</sup> common plural form שתו ‘they are reserved/put/laid/appointed’. The exact form of the noun plus the כ preposition occurs nineteen times in the HB.<sup>217</sup> The verb שית is very closely related to שים, but the majority of its occurrences are in pre-exilic literature, but especially “elevated” in poetic literature.<sup>218</sup> Dahood (1966: 300) emends the MT’s שתו šattu to the qal passive šitu “they will be put in Sheol”. He sees this as recalling Ps. 16:10 “you will not place me in Sheol”, but also compares KTU 1.4.VIII.15-18, “Do not approach divine Mot lest he put you like a lamb into his mouth”. According to Vanoni, שית is semantically malleable and has a wide variety of uses.<sup>219</sup> However, the reflexive understanding is still sensible, and there is no need to emend it as Dahood has. English translations vary, but broadly

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<sup>216</sup> Murphy (1976: 463). Cf. Prov. 1:6.

<sup>217</sup> Of these nineteen occurrences, several main emphases are connected to כצאן: a) “like sheep without a shepherd”: Num. 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Isa. 13:14, 53:6; 2 Chron. 18:16; b) “like sheep for the slaughter”: Jer. 12:3; Ezek. 36:38 (2x); Pss. 44:12, 23, 49:15; c) with positive force (increase/God as the shepherd): Ezek. 36:37; Mic. 2:12; Zech. 9:16; Pss. 77:21, 78:52, 80:2, 107:41; and d) in the context of the prosperity of the wicked and descending to Sheol, which relates to Ps. 49: Job 21:11.

<sup>218</sup> Meier (NIDOTTE, 4: 100).

<sup>219</sup> TDOT (14: 652).

interpret the phrase reflexively: ‘*they have put themselves in Sheol*’, or ‘*they are reserved for Sheol*’.<sup>220</sup> Hans-Joachim (1988: 479-80) views the text as “irreparably corrupt” and emends שָׁחוּ to שָׁחוּ “they sink”, and also emends MT’s וַיִּרְדּוּ ‘*and they will rule over them*’ (רדה), to וַיִּרְדּוּ ‘*and they will go down*’ (ירד).<sup>221</sup> His translation omits the final part of the verse, as he claims that it can only tentatively be reconstructed to:

כצאן מות ירעם לשאול שחו וירדו

“Like a herd death shepherds them, to the underworld ‘they sink down’”.

Verse 15 is also the only instance in the HB where death is personified as a shepherd. Dahood (1966: 300) cites Albright on a text from Egypt (Magical Papyrus Harris) that mentions the chthonic deity *Hauron*, who in the Magical Papyrus is called the “valiant shepherd”. While this is interesting, Albright (2006: 80) also adds that this deity “protects his worshippers from wild beasts”, which clearly fails to align with the context and meaning of Ps. 49:15. Death as a shepherd is a clear personification of death. However, this is figurative and likely meant as an antithesis to YHWH as the shepherd of his people.<sup>222</sup> Other passages cited above link the metaphor of sheep to the slaughter with a Jerusalem sacrifice (cf. especially, Ezek. 36:38).

For Alter (2007: 174) 15c – וַיִּרְדּוּ בָם יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֹקֶר ‘*and the upright will rule over them for the morning*’ – is an anomalous expression indicating that the “powerful will awake in the underworld to discover that the upright now rule them”. This understanding is also reflected in the LXX.<sup>223</sup>

<sup>220</sup> E.g. KJV: “Like sheep they are laid in the grave”; NRSV & ESV: “Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol”; NIV: “They are like sheep and are destined to die”; ASV: “They are appointed as a flock for Sheol”; YLT: “As sheep for Sheol they have set themselves”; NET: “They will travel to Sheol like sheep”.

<sup>221</sup> So also Dahood (1966: 300); Anderson (1977: 379).

<sup>222</sup> Briggs (1960: 410).

<sup>223</sup> καὶ κατακυριεύσουσιν αὐτῶν οἱ εὐθεῖς τὸ πρωί ‘*And the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning*’.

As stated above, some interpreters emend the MT to read *'and they will go down'*, which links with the phrase *לבלות וצירם לצירם* *'and their form will decay'*. This may allude to the corruption of the corpses in the grave and the wasting away of the memory of those who enter Sheol, which is their final dwelling (*לואו מואל לו* *'Sheol shall be a dwelling for him'*).

The concept of ransom (*פרדה*) from the hand of Sheol (*מיר-ואול*) in 16a seems to intimate something deeper than mere deliverance or rescue. While it appears that verses 8-10 imply that no one can be ransomed from death and Sheol, Johnston (1995: 220) points out that the psalmist is discussing the oppressive rich whose wealth cannot redeem them from the pit of Sheol. Even without the positive affirmation of 16a, and in a similar manner to the rhetorical question in Ps. 89:49, YHWH's power to redeem from death would still be implicit here.

The exact phrase *מיר-ואול* *'from the hand of Sheol'* also occurs in Ps. 89:49 and Hos. 13:14. Both Hos. 13:14 and Ps. 89:49 are comparable to Ps. 49 with similar vocabulary. In Ps. 89:49 it is implicit that, while a mere mortal cannot deliver their own soul from Sheol, God can deliver. This, however, leaves us with the question of whether one sees death if God does deliver (see analysis at 4.1.11. below). In Hos. 13:14, on the other hand, ransom or redemption from Sheol and death equates to a return for the nation from exile, which is implied in the context (see analysis at 3.2.2.). Might this be a resurrection antecedent? If so, do we also have here in Ps. 49:16 the hint of hope in some form of survival of death?<sup>224</sup>

The following phrase in 16b, *כי יקחני סלה* *'for he will take me, selah'*, may likewise intimate eternal life with God, where *לקח* may be a possible allusion to the tradition of Enoch (cf. Gen. 5:24). Furthermore, the concept of forever or eternity is twice mentioned, a) *נצח* in verse 10, and b) *לעולם* in verse 12.

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<sup>224</sup> Cf. also Job 33:28-30.

In Ps. 49, Sheol is distinctly the fate or way of the foolhardy, and the wealthy fools who trust in their worldly affluence. The text of verse 15, in particular, is notoriously difficult to read, but a stark contrast between the psalmist's fate and that of the foolhardy is clear. Verses 17-21 are a consolation to the righteous who suffer and witness the prosperity of the wicked. Their end is described very much as death being the complete cessation of life, where worldly wealth ceases to have value for them. These elements are reminiscent of aspects of Job and Proverbs, and much of the psalm contains sapiential language. For this reason, Ps. 49 may be viewed as a wisdom psalm.

For God, to ransom one's soul from death and Sheol may also be a resurrection or afterlife antecedent. Implicitly, life now, where the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper, has as its obverse a complete end of the wicked and justice for the righteous. The emphasis on the good life, and prosperity of the wicked who ultimately descend into Sheol unable to take this life (חַדְלָל) with them, stands in contrast to being taken (לְקַח) by God in the final phrase of verse 16. While a future life is not elaborated on in any way, the explicit language of eternity in verses 10 and 12 implies that the hope of the psalmist is to have some form of continued life in communion with YHWH.

#### 4.1.8. Ps. 55:16

*May death overtake them; may they go down to Sheol alive, for evils are in their dwelling and in their heart.*

Ps. 55 is a Davidic psalm and prayer against adversaries. This is given in the superscription and first stanza (verses 1 to 4). Prayer and praise for deliverance from enemies is a common theme in the Davidic psalms that mention Sheol.<sup>225</sup>

The initial phrase in 16a, *יְשִׁימוֹת עֲלֵימוֹ* 'May death overtake them', seems to connote sudden

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<sup>225</sup> Pss. 6:8, 10; 9:4, 6; 18:1; 30:2; 31:8; 86:14; 139:19-22.

death. The Qere and versions suggest a separation of *מוֹת* and *יְשִׁי(א)*.<sup>226</sup> The text is certainly problematic, but as we have seen, sudden or premature death is frequently connected with Sheol. The experience of the psalmist so described in verses 5-8, where the terrors of death (*אִימוֹת מוֹת*) and horror overwhelm him (*והכסני פלצות*), should also inform our interpretation. The psalmist's wish that the wicked would be overtaken or surprised by death, which is consistent with an untimely death.

The phrase in 16b, *יִרְדּוּ שְׂאוֹל חַיִּים* 'may they go down to Sheol alive', evokes the imagery of Num. 16:30-33.<sup>227</sup> The mention of evils in their dwellings in 16c is perhaps also a slight allusion to the rebels of Korah, where Moses instructs the people in Num. 16:26-27 to stay away from their dwellings. In other words, their homes or dwellings and are also corrupt. In this way, going down to Sheol alive is an expression that perhaps became a fate synonymous with the enemies of God and those who rebel against YHWH and his anointed servants. In Num. 16, the rebels turned against Moses, whereas here, David's enemies and companion have turned against him.

In Ps. 55, Sheol is the destination of the wicked enemies of the psalmist. As in Ps. 9, here the AV saw fit to translate Sheol as Hell. Anachronistic as this may be, it is difficult to view Sheol in Ps. 55 as the common grave of all irrespective of one's good or evil deeds, as the psalmist gives his reason for hoping in their demise: '*for evils are in their dwelling and in their heart*'. Descending alive into Sheol recalls Num. 16:30-33, and the notion of the wicked entering Sheol alive, surprised and fully cognizant of their wickedness, lends a supernatural dimension to Sheol. Additionally, the unusual phrase in verse 24, *לְבֵאֵר שְׁחַת* '*pit of destruction*', deserves a comment. It is a conflation of two Sheol synonyms indicating that Sheol in verse 16 is a place of destruction or annihilation (cf. Isa. 38:17 – *מִשְׁחַת בְּלִי*). This does not preclude an understanding of this phrase as the grave being a pit of corruption or decomposition in a similar manner to Ps. 16:10. Arguably, this is the LXX's

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<sup>226</sup> Kraus (1988: 519); Tate (1990: 53). Cf. Ps. 89:22.

<sup>227</sup> Kraus (1988: 521-22).

understanding: φρέαρ διαφθορᾶς ‘*pit of corruption*’. However, the psalmist’s desire for his adversary’s annihilation does set their death apart from what he might hope for himself. Hell, of course, is not to be viewed here, but it is easily seen how this verse and others like it (cf. Num. 16:30-33; Ps. 9:18) served to inform the development of later notions of a post-mortem destination reserved for the wicked.

#### 4.1.9. Ps. 86:13

*For your loving kindness is great upon me, and you have rescued my soul from Sheol beneath.*

There is little in Ps. 86 that serves to clarify what it means for the psalmist to be delivered from the depths of Sheol. The psalmist is reticent about the details concerning his enemies, and there are no parallel phrases, synonyms, or common underworld terms that would otherwise shed light on the function of Sheol here. Rather, phrases such as כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה עֲזַרְתָּנִי וּנְחַמְתָּנִי ‘*for you, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me*’ in verse 17, clarify what the psalmist is praising God for. Arguably, this suggests that here Sheol stands for a state of mental distress, that, in accordance with the grade of its intensity, is nothing short of a state of death for the psalmist that he has been delivered from.

The phrase כִּי־חַסְדְּךָ גָדוֹל עָלַי ‘*For your loving kindness is great upon me*’ in verse 13a appears as the fulfilment of the psalmist’s prayer in verses 1-7, but especially verse 5, where God’s loving kindness abounds for all who call on him. In this way, the deliverance from Sheol is perhaps a figurative way of describing God’s mercy and personal forgiveness for the psalmist, which also results in God’s protection against enemies.

Dahood (1968: 295) takes the MT’s עֲלֵי in 13a as an appellative referring to God as the “Most High”. His interpretation of Sheol then sees מִשְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּיָּה as a deliberate contrast, and “theological

wordplay”, which he sees as necessary for eliminating the hapax construction of גְּדוּל עָלַי. He discusses this at length with justification in his commentary on Ps. 7:9 (see 1966: 45). However, there is no need to translate עָלַי in this way when ‘upon me’, or ‘towards me’, makes perfect sense in both psalms, as well as the other passages cited by Dahood (cf. Pss. 7:9, 13:6, and 32:5).

As with Pss. 30:4 and 49:16, the deliverance of one’s נַפְשׁ from Sheol (13b) is a figurative expression for rescue from the brink of death. מִשְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּיהָ symbolizes the adverse state before his rescue. תַּחְתִּי refers to the underworld in various contexts, including some passages where Sheol is not mentioned (cf. Ezek. 26:20, 31:14, 18, 32:18, 24; Pss. 63:10, 88:7, 139:15; Lam 3:55),<sup>228</sup> and some passages where Sheol is explicitly mentioned (cf. Deut. 32:22; 14:9, 11 [תַּחַת is not directly attached to Sheol here]; Ezek. 31:16 [in reference to Sheol in the phrase בְּאֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּית ‘the land beneath/world below’]).<sup>229</sup> It also generally refers to something specifically *lower*, or the lowest level, as in Josh. 15:19 (= Judg. 1:15) contrasting the upper springs (גְּלִית עֲלִיּוֹת) with the lower springs (גְּלִית תַּחְתִּיּוֹת) given to Caleb’s daughter, Achsah (see also: Ex. 19:17; Job 41:16[24]; Neh. 4:13).<sup>230</sup>

On נִצַּל, Kissane (1954: 79) states that, as 13b depends on verse 12, the perfect tense of נִצַּל is “equivalent to the future perfect”. In this way, he sees God’s deliverance from Sheol as saving the psalmist from premature death and compares 2a.

Sheol in Ps. 86 is likely a close encounter with death at the hand of his enemies, where the

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<sup>228</sup> The example in Isa. 44:23 is likely the earth beneath in contrast to the “heavens above” TWOT (2: 968). However, if תַּחְתִּי generally refers to something lower, then the phrase תַּחְתִּיּוֹת אֶרֶץ may be thought to refer to the underworld in a cosmological sense. LXX: θεμέλια τῆς γῆς ‘foundations of the earth’.

<sup>229</sup> Elsewhere in relation to Sheol, the depths are expressed as follows: Prov. 9:18 (עֲמֹק); 15:24 (מַטְהָ); Isa. 7:11 (עֲמֹק). Kraus (1989: 183) translates שְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּיהָ as the “lowest underworld”. He interprets this to mean the “domain of God-forsakenness and of death”.

<sup>230</sup> DCH: 627-28; Alexander (NIDOTTE, 4: 287-88). The distinction of something being *lower* is also true of another derivative of תַּחַת: תַּחְתִּיּוֹן (cf. 1 Kgs 9:17; Isa. 22:9; 1 Chron. 7:24; 2 Chron. 8:5). Briggs (<sup>2</sup>1960: 235): ‘from the nether Sheol’; Dahood (1968: 292): ‘from deepest Sheol’; Hossfeld and Zenger (2005: 368): ‘from the nethermost realm of the dead’; Kraus (1989: 180): ‘from the lowest underworld’; Weiser (1962: 575): ‘from the nethermost hell’.

psalmist praises God for his deliverance. Or, it is a state of distress, albeit a deathly one, that the psalmist has been healed of and thus describes it in terms of being rescued from Sheol itself. However, in the context of the prayer, mention of his deliverance from Sheol comes after his petition for God's help (verses 1-7), and is tacked on to the end of the second pericope (verses 8-13), where his praise for God is as if he has at that very point been delivered. This would not be unusual if the psalm ended there, but verses 14-17 resume the petitioning of verses 1-7. In this way, it may be that verses 8-13 are the expected outcome of verses 1-7, and especially verse 7, with verses 14-17 indicating that what is asked for, and expected, has not yet been fulfilled. In this case, Sheol is a deathly threat.

The underworld is not, of course, absent from this equation, *משאול תחתיה* is an emphatic phrase that may refer to the lower-most part of Sheol, as in the LXX (ἐξ ἄδου κατωτάτου 'from the lowest Hades'), but apart from this phrase as colourful poetry, there is nothing truly otherworldly about Sheol's function here. Rather, Sheol is death by the hands of the psalmist's enemies, but a death that, according to verse 13, he has been delivered from.

#### 4.1.10. Ps. 88:4

*For my soul is filled with afflictions, and my life has drawn near to Sheol*<sup>231</sup>

Ps. 88 is extremely bleak, and the poem is replete with underworld and deathly phraseology. It is one of four psalms containing Sheol that is not Davidic. The underworld language here is likely a poetic description of the psalmist's distress. He is figuratively in Sheol, and the extreme adversity of the experience appears to be viewed by the psalmist as an indication of divine judgement. While

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<sup>231</sup> Kraus (1989: 193) translates Sheol here as "kingdom of death" and states that, "he who is marked for death already is considered dead". Kraus goes on to add that concerning *בור* in verse 5, *בור* is the grave and entrance to the kingdom of death. He discusses also the possibility that lepers actually had to live in tombs. Johnston (2002: 95-96), however, provides a critique of Kraus' interpretation and notes that most commentators see the psalmist's references to being in the underworld as metaphorical.

interpreters often comment on the bleakness of this psalm, Goulder (1982: 203) highlights the fact that the psalmist addresses YHWH as אֱלֹהֵי יְשׁוּעָתִי ‘*God of my salvation*’ and that YHWH’s loving kindness is presupposed in verse 11. That being said, Ps. 88 is certainly not a song of praise, but a lament.<sup>232</sup>

For מַחֲלָה in the superscription, Dahood (1968: 302) sees a possible connection with חוּל ‘*whirl, dance, writhe*’ (BDB: 296) and for לְעֹנֹת, עָנָה ‘*answer, respond*’ (BDB: 772), which he understands as referring to antiphonal singing.<sup>233</sup> However, the noun מַחֲלָה refers to sickness in various passages.<sup>234</sup> Lamentation is further indicated by צַעַק in verse 2, whereas the following verb רָנָה is a cry of supplication in the context of prayer.<sup>235</sup> The importance of this in the opening stanza (verse 1-3) is in providing the setting for the psalm. The psalmist is in great distress, possibly over an extreme illness, but certainly over some form of adversity. While it would be erroneous to say that he is, or was, literally in Sheol, the proximity of death is so close that the language describes an experience of being under death’s power.<sup>236</sup>

The occurrence of Sheol in verse 4 forms part of a chiasmic structure that deserves some attention:

- A – Verb: שָׁבְעָה ‘*it is filled*’  
 B – Noun: בְּרָעוֹת ‘*with afflictions*’  
 C – Noun (suffix, 1 comm. sing.): נַפְשִׁי ‘*my soul*’  
 C<sup>2</sup> – Noun (suffix, 1 comm. sing.): חַיִּי ‘*my life*’  
 B<sup>2</sup> – Noun: לְשֵׁאוֹל ‘*to Sheol*’  
 A<sup>2</sup> – Verb: הִגִּיעַו ‘*it touched/drew near*’

<sup>232</sup> For a detailed discussion of על מַחֲלָה לְעֹנֹת in the superscription, see Tate (1990: 394-95).

<sup>233</sup> Dahood (1968: 302).

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Ex. 15:26, 23:25; Prov. 18:14; 2 Chron. 21:15.

<sup>235</sup> BDB: 943. Cf. Ps. 17:1, 61:2, 119:169, 142:7.

<sup>236</sup> Bauckham (1998: 15-17). Bauckham (16) affirms the consensus that the Hebrews believed that there was no return from Sheol citing Job 7:9, 10:21, 16:22 and 2 Sam. 12:23.

4a: כִּי־שָׁבַעָה בְרַעוֹת נַפְשִׁי ‘*For my soul is filled with afflictions*’ – Here, the feminine plural noun רַעוֹת ‘*afflictions*’ is parallel with Sheol and may denote the afflictions associated with divine judgement (cf. Jer. 18:8, 26:3, 13; Jon. 3:10).

4b: וַחַיִּי לְשֹׂאֵל הַגֵּיעוּ ‘*and my life has drawn near to Sheol*’ – The psalmist’s life is close to its end,<sup>237</sup> but the hiphil perfect may also indicate that the psalmist views his circumstances as an experience of being in Sheol already.<sup>238</sup>

Verse 4 begins a slew of underworld phrases and allusions from verses 5-8. In verse 5 he is counted among those who descend into the pit (יִוְרְדֵי בּוֹר), and like a man who has no strength or vitality (כַּגִּבּוֹר אֵין אֵיל). He is like the slain who lie in the grave (כַּמּוֹ חַלְלִים שְׁכַבֵי קֶבֶר), which is comparable to Ezek. 32:24-25, 29-30. In light of Ezek. 32, this phrase, along with יִוְרְדֵי בּוֹר, may serve to demonstrate that those who descend into the pit of Sheol are forsaken by and cut off from God, as we read in verse 6. In other words, Sheol is the place of those dead who were cut off prematurely as a result of divine judgement (cf. also, Isa. 38:18 [see 3.2.1. v]). These dead, the slain ones, are also remembered no more (cf. Job 7:9, 14:13; Ps. 6:6). Verse 7 functions as a description of the pit of Sheol being the ‘*depths of the pit*’ (בְּבוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת) in darkness (בְּמַחְשָׁכִים) and the deep (בְּמַצְלוֹת).<sup>239</sup> Finally, verse 8 ties off the pericope making it clear that the above is the psalmist’s experience of divine wrath, where God’s waves have afflicted him.<sup>240</sup>

Sheol in Ps. 88 is the pit (בוֹר) of the grave and the underworld of the dead, but it is a place that the psalmist has drawn near to (הַגֵּיעוּ); that is, his adverse circumstances are a death-like experience and one that in a sense *is* Sheol already. As Levenson (2006: 46) affirms: “his condition – agonizing

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<sup>237</sup> LXX: τῷ ἄδη ἤγγισεν ‘*it drew near to Hades*’. Cf. Ps. 44:26.

<sup>238</sup> Tromp (1969: 36).

<sup>239</sup> The LXX appears to read צַלְמוֹת (σῶμα θανάτου ‘*shadow of death*’) in place of the MT’s מַצְלוֹת ‘*deep*’.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Jon. 2:4; Ps. 42:8.

misfortune infinitely compounded by God-forsakenness – is very much the condition of Sheol”. This is made clear in verse 7, where he states that God has put him ‘*in the depths of the pit: in darkness; in the deep*’, which is comparable to other psalmodic passages featuring synonymous underworld phraseology (cf. Ps. 69:3, 16). Verse 8 indicates clearly that the psalmist views his circumstances as divine judgement, which further supports the interpretation of Sheol as a fate that is more closely aligned with the wicked or those cut off or estranged from YHWH.

Deliverance is not recorded in this psalm, but perhaps the expectation of it underlies the psalmist’s questions to God regarding his treatment of the dead in verses 11-13, but also his assertion in verses 10 and 14 that he continues to cry out to God. With that said, Ps. 88 makes it clear that Sheol, and the many underworld details briefly covered here, is again aligned with the unrighteous and those who experience divine wrath and judgment.

#### **4.1.11. Ps. 89:49**

*What man lives and does not see death, or delivers his own soul from the hand of Sheol? Selah*

Structurally, Ps. 89 is divided into three main sections: a) hymn (verses 2-19), b) divine discourse (verses 20-38), and c) lament (verses 39-52).<sup>241</sup> Verse 49 falls in the lament section, where Sheol is parallel and synonymous with death. The rhetorical question regarding the deliverance of one’s own soul further underscores the inexorability of death. However, there is the implication that while one is incapable of delivering one’s own soul from death and Sheol, YHWH is capable.

Levenson (2006: 74-75), after arguing that “almost always” Sheol is “the destination of those who die violently, unjustly, in punishment, or with a broken heart”, turns to Ps. 89:49 as an exception

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<sup>241</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger (2005: 406).

to the rule, and an unambiguous affirmation of Sheol being the final destination for everyone. Indeed, the inclusion of גבר in 49a (מִי גִבֹר יִחְיֶה וְלֹא יִרְאֶה מוֹת) suggests that the clause is emphatic, meaning that even the mightiest of men cannot deliver from death (cf., especially, Am. 2:14, 15). Furthermore, the following phrase יִמְלֹט נַפְשׁוֹ ‘or delivers his own soul’ implies that YHWH is the one who can deliver from Sheol. The specificity of a mighty man being unable to deliver his own soul from the greater power of Sheol delineates a hierarchy of powers: a) YHWH (verse 14), b) Sheol, and c) a mighty man (גבר).

In verse 14, the psalmist praises the mightiness of YHWH’s arm and strength of his hand (יָד). This anticipates מִיַּד-שְׁאוֹל ‘from the hand of Sheol?’ in verse 49, and further underscores the power of YHWH.

Like Ps. 88, Ps. 89 is a non-Davidic psalm but attributed to Ethan the Ezrahite. He is one of the three singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 15:19, along with Heman (Ps. 88) and Asaph. Ps. 89 is initially a song of praise to YHWH for the Davidic covenant. After a divine discourse on the covenant and YHWH’s love for David, the song enters a lament. The lament over YHWH’s spurning and present rejection of the covenant recalls verses 31-33 in the divine discourse regarding the punishment of David’s descendants should they forsake God’s laws.

It is implicit in the rhetorical question in verse 49 that only YHWH can deliver from death and Sheol. The question underscores the inexorability of death for all but in this final section (verses 47-52) the emphasis is on the hope in God that he might forgive, remember his covenant with David, and prolong the life of the afflicted psalmist. Here, as in Ps. 88, God-forsakenness is a theme, where forsaken humanity is powerless in the face of death and Sheol, but implicitly YHWH, as the highest power, is the only one who can deliver one’s life or soul.

#### 4.1.12. Ps. 116:3

*The ropes of death encompassed me, and the perils<sup>242</sup> of Sheol had found me; I had found distress and grief*

Ps. 116 is another deliverance psalm. Each reference to Sheol or death has as its counterpoint praises to God for his deliverance and salvation.

Verse 3 closely resembles Ps. 18:5 (2 Sam. 22:5). The phrase *הבלי־מות* ‘ropes/snares of death’ in 3a also occurs in the context of Sheol and death at Ps. 18:5, and there it is parallel with *נהלי בליעל* ‘the torrents of Belial’. Here, however, it is parallel with *מצרי שאול* ‘distresses of Sheol’.<sup>243</sup>

Dahood (1970: 146) rejects the traditional rendering of *מצרי שאול* as ‘distresses/pangs of Sheol’<sup>244</sup> saying that such a rendering cannot be reconciled with *מצאני*, the traditional rendering of which he also assumes is correct. This is peculiar, as the poetry does not preclude the possibility of such a saying. Rather, the following phrase in 3c, *צרה ויגון אמצא* ‘I had found distress and grief’, though it appears as the reverse of 3b, may be added to 3b to form a hyperbolic construct. In this way, the same thing is said twice in parallel figurative expressions, the effect of which is as if the distresses or pangs of Sheol and the psalmist had met or found each other. Johnston (2002: 87) views this expression as an indirect statement, meaning that the psalmist has prayed and been delivered and does not speak literally as if he had actually been in Sheol.

It must be remembered that this is a poetic text and not a prosaic one, and therefore it is not difficult to speak of the pains, woes or perils of Sheol as having “found” the speaker; it is a figurative

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<sup>242</sup> Kraus (1989: 387) mentions the ancient world’s conception of death as a prison to support the idea that *מצרי* is best translated as “dungeon”, but his actual translation of the phrase is “fears of the underworld”.

<sup>243</sup> 2 Sam. 22:5 – *משברי־מות* ‘waves of death’. Comparable poetic phrases with a negative emphasis include, Isa. 5:18 – *בהבלי השוא* ‘in the snares of falsehood’; Ps. 119: 61 – *הבלי רשעים* ‘snares of the wicked’; Job 36:8 – *בהבלי עני* ‘in the snares of affliction’; Prov. 5:22 – *בהבלי הטאהו* ‘in the snares of their sin’.

<sup>244</sup> So, for example, RSV, NRSV, ESV, KJV.

expression and a variation on ‘*the ropes of death*’, which the psalmist then reflects as something he has found or happened upon. Hossfeld and Zenger (2011: 217) view verses 3-6 as a narrative of rescue from mortal danger, where the metaphors in verse 3 describe the “life-threatening narrowness of the world of the dead”.

Verse 3 comes in the context of praising God for his protection, his answer to prayer and supplication, and his mercy and graciousness. As with other deliverance psalms, Sheol appears to function not as having been the literal state of the psalmist, but a state of distress and danger that brings one to the brink of actual death. This is further clarified in verses 8-9, where the psalmist’s soul is delivered from death, his eyes from tears and his feet from stumbling that he may walk in ‘*the lands of the living*’, which is clearly the alternative to death.<sup>245</sup>

#### 4.1.13. Ps. 139:8

*If I ascend the heavens, you are there; and if I spread my couch in Sheol,  
behold you are there!*<sup>246</sup>

In Ps. 139, the central theme is that of YHWH’s limitless knowledge and power. Attached to this is the psalmist’s appeal to that power and omniscience to both destroy wickedness and his enemies (verses 19-22), and to search him, know him and see if there is any ‘*hurtful way*’ (דַרְךְ-עֵצָב) in him (verses 23-24).

Kissane (1954: 291) sees the psalmist’s appeal as indicating the suffering of the just and that the psalmist has thus far been denied his due reward. Allen (2002: 327) sees the exposure to God’s scrutiny and the psalmist’s prayer as indicating that he is under some kind of attack. However, it is difficult to perceive any form of complaint or lament here on the part of the psalmist. Apart from the desire for

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<sup>245</sup> See also Suriano (2018: 245).

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Job 11:8, 17:13, 26:6; Prov. 15:11; Isa. 7:11, 29:15; Am. 9:2.

the destruction of his enemies, the psalm does not contain other elements common to lament psalms.<sup>247</sup>

Furthermore, the poetic theological statements regarding the nature of YHWH's power and infinitude seem more a matter of praise, especially in light of verses 6, 14 and 17.

Regarding the phrase **וְאֶצִיעָהּ שְׂאוּל הַנֶּחֱד** in 8b, some commentators see Sheol figuratively as the bed itself, for example: *'if I make Sheol my bed'*.<sup>248</sup> The cohortative form (**וְאֶצִיעָהּ**) may support this if one is to understand the psalmist as desiring or seeking Sheol in an attempt to escape YHWH's presence (cf. Job 17:13).<sup>249</sup> However, in terms of spatial concerns and YHWH's limitless presence, a similar meaning is nevertheless conveyed when rendered as *'if I spread my couch in Sheol'*. The LXX simply rephrases 8b as the obverse of ascending the heavens: *ἐὰν καταβῶ εἰς τὸν ᾅδην, πάρει* *'if I descend into Hades, you are there'*. While the LXX omits **וְאֶצִיעָהּ**, the meaning of the verse as a contrast between extremities where YHWH is ever present is retained.

Briggs suggests that the verbs **סִלַּק**, an Aramaic loan word, and **יָצַע** were later scribal insertions, as the measure is better without them.<sup>250</sup> The problem with this is that omitting the verbs shortens the verse significantly. Furthermore, if spreading one's couch in Sheol is viewed as implying the sleep of death, and ascending the heavens its obverse, which may be construed as life in YHWH's presence (cf. verse 24: **וְנַחֲנִי בַדְרֶךְ עוֹלָם**), then the furthest reaches of the cosmos are perhaps better accounted for in the poetry.

Ps. 139 is characterized by special praise of YHWH's infinitude and omnipresence. Consequently, there is nothing especially sinister attached to Sheol in verse 8. The figurative expression of spreading one's couch or bed in the underworld, suggests that Sheol is here the underworld and place of the dead. However, Sheol comes with a series of poetic conditional clauses

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<sup>247</sup> Clifford (2003: 279).

<sup>248</sup> So Dahood (1970: 283); Kissane (1954: 292). See also: BDB: 426.

<sup>249</sup> In Job 17:13, the noun **יָצַע** is employed, whereas the verb **רָפַד** is used for spreading out Job's bed or couch.

<sup>250</sup> Briggs (1952: 494).

expressing the omnipresence of YHWH, and that, as spirit (verse 7), God is not spatially limited.<sup>251</sup> As in Job 26:6 and Prov. 15:11, even the furthest reaches of Sheol are known to YHWH. The verb plus Sheol (אֲצִיעָה שְׂאוֹל) seems to function as a euphemism for death, and in this way, the theological point is thus clarified; that is, YHWH is all powerful and omnipresent even among the dead.

#### 4.1.14. Ps. 141:7

*As when one ploughs and breaks up the earth, our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol*

The details of Ps. 141:7 alone are consistent with the general conception of Sheol being the place of the dead and under the earth. Here, the ploughed earth or broken topsoil (אֲרֵץ) in 7a equates to the mouth of Sheol in 7b, and therefore Sheol, or perhaps the grave, is presumably beneath or deeper than אֲרֵץ. The anthropomorphic feature of a mouth implying a consuming underworld is also comparable with other Sheol passages (cf. Num. 16:30, 33; Prov. 1:12, 27:20, 30:16; Isa. 5:14).

There is a general consensus that verses 5 – 7 have been corrupted, and furthermore that עֲצְמוֹתֵינוּ ‘our bones’ in 7b should be emended to עֲצְמוֹתֵיהֶם ‘their bones’ in accordance with some of the Greek versions and Syriac.<sup>252</sup> The LXX, however, follows the MT with the first person plural genitive ὀστέων ἡμῶν (our bones). In this light, Kissane (1954: 305) suggests that the MT is correct.

Clearly, עֲצְמוֹתֵינוּ is not in keeping with the first person singular emphasis of the psalm, with the third person plural referring to the wicked deeds (verse 5d: בְּרַעוּתֵיהֶם) and delicacies (verse 4c:

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<sup>251</sup> Weiser (1962: 803-04).

<sup>252</sup> So Kraus (1989: 526); Briggs (1960: 508); Allen (2002: 340); Dahood (1970: 313); Clifford (2003: 289); Weiser (1959: 811).

בְּמִנְעַמֵּיהֶם) of evil men. In this way, if the text has indeed been corrupted, the emendation makes good sense.<sup>253</sup>

Dahood (1970: 313-14) views אֶרֶץ as parallel with Sheol in verse 7, and thus interprets it as synonymous with Sheol. He then draws a comparison between Jer. 15:7 and Ps. 141:7b, and there translates אֶרֶץ as “nether city”. As with Dahood’s frequent attempts at viewing אֶרֶץ as the underworld, his identification of אֶרֶץ as such in Jer. 15:7 makes little sense in that context. Admittedly, the phrase אֶרֶץ הַאֲרָץ ‘*gates of the land*’ in Jer. 15:7 is reminiscent of שַׁעַר שְׂאוֹל in Isa. 38:10, but the context of the Jeremiah passage contains little else that would relate to the underworld. Rather, the judgement on the people described there suggests that אֶרֶץ הַאֲרָץ more likely refers to the gates of their cities that have been or will be destroyed. Of course, the Ugaritic cognate *arṣ* is often understood as referring to the underworld, but this becomes problematic in Hebrew, where few passages make clear reference to the underworld with the use of אֶרֶץ (cf. Gen. 2:6; Ex. 15:12; Isa. 29:4, 44:23; Jon. 2:7; Ps. 147:6; Job 10:21-22).

How then is Sheol to be understood here? Whether Sheol is to be aligned exclusively with the wicked or with the psalmist (with or without the emendation from 11QPs<sup>a</sup> to the singular), the issue seems to be anchored on the conundrum presented by the possible corruption of the text with עֲצְמוֹתָיו. There is good reason to favour עֲצְמוֹתָיו in the context, especially in light of verse 6. As mentioned, Sheol as a consuming underworld is congruous with other underworld passages. However, there are no other deathly or underworld allusions in the psalm that would help to explicate Sheol’s function or render this occurrence unique. It is easily construed as the grave with the topsoil or earth, here expressed in the Hebrew with אֶרֶץ, being the gateway, entrance, or in this case, mouth of the

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<sup>253</sup> 11QPs<sup>a</sup> of Ps. 141:7 reads: כִּמוֹ פֶלֶחַ יִבְקַע בְּאֶרֶץ נִפְזָרוּ עֲצְמוֹתַי לְפִי אִשְׂאוֹל. The participle of בִּקַּע in MT looks like an imperfect; עֲצְמוֹתַי ‘*my bones*’ instead of עֲצְמוֹתָיו; and a prosthetic א on Sheol (see JM §17a). See also: Reymond (2014: 151-153); Elisha Qimron (1986: 39).

underworld. Bones and other materials previously buried in the surface layer of earth are perhaps what one might expect to find suddenly exposed in the process of ploughing. However,  $\gamma\bar{\tau}\aleph$  is not synonymous with Sheol itself. Rather,  $\gamma\bar{\tau}\aleph$  poetically functions as the mouth of Sheol. In this way, Sheol may be seen as taking on a supernatural or otherworldly depth as the place of the dead, and quite distinct from the earth's surface.

## 4.2. SUMMARY

In the Psalms, Sheol is consistently aligned with the psalmist's enemies, the unrighteous or various afflictions. Sheol is an unwelcome fate and one that the psalmist wishes to avoid, or prays to be delivered from. The deliverance psalms, where the psalmist praises YHWH for having already delivered him from Sheol, make clear that severe adverse circumstances may be viewed as a state of Sheol or an enfeebled existence under the power of death. These typically come in the form of extreme mental anguish, physical illness, or crippling fear in the face of potential death from enemies, which is a consistent theme. Nine of the fourteen psalms containing Sheol are prayers for deliverance from enemies (Pss. 6, 9, 18, 30, 31, 55, 86, 139, and 141), where the implicit threat appears to be untimely death by the enemy's hand. Exactly who the enemies are in general is difficult to determine. Ps. 18 (= 2 Sam. 22) provides this detail in the superscription (Saul) and is the only psalm in the collection of Sheol psalms to do so.

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## JOB IN SHEOL

### 5.1. JOB

There are eight occurrences of Sheol in the book of Job. Seven of these occurrences appear in speeches of Job himself and the remaining occurrence in a speech by one of Job's friends, namely Zophar (Job 11:8). Unsurprisingly, given Job's extreme adverse circumstances, the book of Job is replete with references to death and the underworld, along with other allusions to the underworld. צלמות, for instance, is found in Job ten times out of the 18 biblical occurrences of this term. Three of those examples appear as allusions to the underworld (10:21-22, 38:17).<sup>254</sup> That being said, while a comprehensive survey of the subject of death, the underworld and related terminology in the book of Job, would undoubtedly be of great interest, it is beyond the scope of the present study.<sup>255</sup>

#### 5.1.1. Job 7:9

*A cloud vanishes and passes away. So too, the one who descends to Sheol, he will not ascend.*

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<sup>254</sup> For detailed treatments of צלמות, see in particular Thomas (1962: 191-200) and Michel (1984: 5-20).

<sup>255</sup> Some valuable contributions to this topic include, Hays (2011); Michel (1972); Pinker (2007); Suriano (2010).

Following a deeply pessimistic reflection on the painful toil of human existence and that of his own misery with each brief day ending in hopelessness (7:1-6), Job continues to comment on the transience of life and the irreversibility of death.<sup>256</sup> The mention of Sheol in 7:9 then functions as the end of an empty and insignificant life from which there is no return. For our purpose, 7:7-10 forms a small pericope with a tight structure based on a sequence of thematic segues. This will be outlined below.

In 7:7a, Job speaks directly to God<sup>257</sup> and tells him to remember that his life is a breath (רוּחַ חַיִּים). Dhorme (1967: 102) sees here an allusion to Gen. 2:7 and the breath of life. In the Genesis narrative, however, we have נְשַׁמַּת חַיִּים for “breath of life” and not רוּחַ. Even if the distinction is subtle, it is an important one to note in light of Dhorme’s subsequent comparison with Ps. 78:39,<sup>258</sup> as the breath of life in Gen. 2:7 does not indicate anything transient about the life breathed into humanity. Whether or not this lends greater significance to the meaning of נְשַׁמַּת, Dhorme’s comparison with Gen. 2:7 is dubious. His comparison with Ps. 78:39, however, is far more instructive. Ps. 78:39 is thematically comparable to Job 7:7-9 where רוּחַ is similarly used to convey something of the insubstantial and transient nature of human life.

7:8 is missing from the LXX. Its presence in the MT, however, supports the pericope of 7:7-10 both conceptually and structurally. 7:7b introduces an eye motif. This forms a segue into 7:8a, which may be construed as the beginning of an internal tripartite structure that crosses the verses. This structure is delineated by three different sets of eyes: Job’s eye (עֵינַי – 7b), an indefinite eye (עֵיַן – 8a), and presumably God’s eyes in the second person (עֵינֶיךָ – 8b). In their own way, each set of eyes will

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<sup>256</sup> Johnston (2002: 32).

<sup>257</sup> Dhorme (1967: 102).

<sup>258</sup> Dhorme (1967: 102). In Ps. 78:39, God remembers that the people are flesh, and pass away like a wind that does not return: וַיִּזְכֹּר כִּי־בָשָׂר הֵמָּה רוּחַ הוּלֵךְ וְלֹא יָשׁוּב.

no longer see: Job's eye will no longer see goodness, the indefinite eye will no longer behold Job,<sup>259</sup> and while God's eyes are upon Job, he will no longer exist.

Like 7b, 8b forms another segue into 9a with a comparison between Job's ceasing to exist and the vanishing cloud, which further recalls 7a and Job's insistence that God should remember his life is a breath; the transience of clouds in 9a is analogous to the transience of mortal life, specifically Job's in 7a.

For 9b, the versions add "like" when the preposition is missing from the MT.<sup>260</sup> This is to emphasize a perceived comparison between the vanishing cloud and the one who descends into Sheol. While the preposition's absence in the MT is not especially problematic, the vanishing cloud seems to relate more readily to the preceding material in 8b. The transience of life is conveyed in verses 7-9a, whereas the irreversibility and finality of death continue from 9b-10.

While the transience of life and the irreversibility of death are closely related themes, the statement about Sheol in 9b may be thought of as forming yet another segue into the subsequent material in 10a. Those who go down to Sheol do not come up (9b) and no longer return to their own homes (10a). 10b then acts as a coda, which ties off the pericope. The idea that he is no longer recognised in his own place recalls his statement in 8b that he will no longer exist (וְאֵינִי). What this structure shows, is a sequence of related ideas that move logically from 7a-10b. For clarity, consider the following outline (A-B-A-C). As described above, 7a (Ai) and 9a (Aii) convey similar ideas, while 7b-8b (Bi-Biii) displays the internal tripartite 'eye' section crossing verses, and 9b-10b (Ci-coda) form the final concluding section.

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<sup>259</sup> Dhorme (1967: 102) takes issue with making the eye the subject of the verb שָׁרַר in 8a, and prefers death as the implied subject by comparing its use in Job 20:9. It is obvious, however, that Job has death in mind. Even so, grammatically the subject of the verb is still עֵין. Similarly, in his comparison with 20:9, while death is implicit, מִקְוֶה is the subject of the verb.

<sup>260</sup> So Dhorme (1967: 102-3). The LXX reads, ὡςπερ νέφος ἀποκαθαρθὲν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ 'just as a cloud cleared away from heaven'. See also Clines (1989: 164). Clines notes that כִּי־כַּאֲשֶׁר correlative to כִּי is sometimes omitted from poetry and gives the example of Isa. 55:9 as a comparison. In Isa. 55:9, however, neither כִּי־כַּאֲשֶׁר or כִּי are present: כִּי־גִבְהוֹת שָׁמַיִם מֵאֲרָץ כִּי־גִבְהוֹת דַּרְכֵי מִדְּרָכֶיכֶם 'for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways'.

**7:7a (Ai):** *Remember that my life is a breath*

**7:7b (Bi - Segue):** *My eye will not return/never again perceive goodness*

**7:8a (Bii)** *The eye that sees me will not behold me*

**7:8b (Biii - Segue)** *Your eyes are upon me, and I will be no more*

**7:9a (Aii):** *A vanishing cloud that goes/passes away*

**7:9b (Ci - Segue):** *So the one who descends to Sheol, he will not ascend*

**7:10a (Cii)** *He will not return again to his house,*

**7:10b (coda):** *And he will never again be recognized by his place*

The above compositional outline demonstrates a clear thematic trajectory without rupturing the verses and also addresses the issue of the missing preposition. If, according to the versions, 9a and 9b are taken together as a comparison where perhaps **כִּי** correlative to **כֵּן** is possibly omitted yet assumed,<sup>261</sup> then 9a and 9b function as a straight parallel. The clear feature to be taken from 9b, however, is that there is no return from Sheol. If, as I have demonstrated, 9a echoes the preceding material where Job ceases to exist (8b) or vanishes like a cloud (9a), and 7:9b-10 provides us with its own detail about not returning from Sheol (however closely related these ideas may be), then viewing 9a as a segue to 9b distinguishes Sheol in this passage. Both motifs of the transience of life and no return from Sheol, of course, relate to death more generally. However, human impermanence and the frailty of life does not necessarily preclude a return from death or life beyond it. In this way, the theme of no return from death and Sheol becomes a distinct feature without the need for a strict comparison between 9a and 9b. The resemblance of 9b to the Babylonian “land of no return”, is perhaps also enhanced.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Consider the example of Isa. 55:9 given by Clines (1989: 164).

<sup>262</sup> For this connection, see Dhorme (1969: 103); Clines (1989: 187); Habel (1985: 154). Habel sees Sheol as a “genuine realm of relief”, based on his reading of Job 3:13-19. Pope (1965: 59).

Sheol in Job 7:9 is, of course, synonymous with death and the preceding descriptions in the chapter of a fleeting human existence. It is also the place of no return, which in this instance is an additional detail that compounds Job's bleak view of existence and the hopelessness of his agonising situation. While Job 7:9 is the only biblical passage containing Sheol that explicitly states there is no return therefrom, this theme is germane to the biblical view of death and may be found in a number of other passages. For example, 2 Sam. 12:23; Jon 2:6; Job 10:21-22, 14:12 and 16:32.

### 5.1.2. Job 11:8

*The heights of the heavens! What will you do? Deeper than Sheol! What will you know?*

The occurrence of Sheol in Job 11:8 is the only instance in the book where Job is not the speaker. Here, Zophar is the speaker, and Job is severely rebuked for claiming to be pure in his conduct or learning and clean in the eyes of God in 11:4 (זך לקחי ובר הייתי בעיניך). Zophar continues, wishing for God to tell Job the secrets of wisdom in verse 6, and in verse 7 begins a description of the unfathomable perfection and limits of God. Here, Sheol constitutes one of four extremities in the cosmos listed in verses 8 and 9: height (גבהי שמים), depth (עמקה משאול), length (ארכה מארץ), and breadth (ורחבה מנייִים).<sup>263</sup>

There are four other passages that contrast Sheol with שמים, or with height as an extremity: Ps. 139:8, Prov. 15:24, Isa. 7:11 and Am. 9:2. In both Prov. 15:24 and Isa. 7:11, the obverse of Sheol is מעלה “upwards”,<sup>264</sup> whereas, in Ps. 139:8 and Am. 9:2, the obverse of Sheol is שמים, as it is in Job

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<sup>263</sup> Dhorme (1969: 160).

<sup>264</sup> BDB: 751; HALOT: 613.

11:8. In this instance, Isa. 7:11 shares the same cosmological vocabulary of גבה<sup>265</sup> “be high” and עמוק “be deep”,<sup>266</sup> as hiphil infinitives. In Job 11:8, however, גבה is taken as a construct plural noun and עמוק as an adjective, which seems to cause some difficulty with the parallel between the phrases “height of the heavens” and “deeper than Sheol”.

For the phrase גבהי שמים ‘heights of the heavens’, the LXX makes sense of this with an adjective and then follows the Hebrew with the question: ὑψηλὸς ὁ οὐρανός, καὶ τί ποιήσεις ‘high is heaven, and what will you do?’. BHS proposes an emendation from the MT’s construct plural noun plus שמים to the adjective plus מן preposition (גבהה מן). The emendation is intended to form a more exact parallel with עמוקה משאול ‘deeper than Sheol’. Dhorme (1969: 160) supports the emendation, noting that the context suggests the proposed alternative reading. He also states that the Vulgate attests to the parallel reading where the comparative suffix is added to “high” and “deep” thus forming the parallel: excelsior caelo... profundior inferno ‘higher than heaven... deeper than hell’. While it may seem appropriate to have a proper parallel, where the construct noun גבהי is emended, the meaning and force of the language is the same. The phrase גבהי שמים is still intelligible as a cosmological extremity in Zophar’s discussion of the limits of the Almighty (תכלית שרי).<sup>267</sup>

The occurrence of Sheol in Job 11:8 is similar to the occurrence in Isa. 7:11 in that Sheol functions in both passages as the opposite cosmological extreme of the heavens, or the greatest conceivable height. Its significance in Job 11:8 is its place in the cosmos as the greatest conceivable depth, beyond which the limits of God are unsearchable and unattainable. For this reason, Zophar asks how it is possible for him to claim that he is righteous in God’s eyes.<sup>268</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Qal = ‘be high’; hiphil = ‘make high, exalt’ (BDB: 146; HALOT: 170-71).

<sup>266</sup> Qal = ‘be deep, mysterious’; hiphil = ‘make deep’ (BDB: 770; HALOT: 847).

<sup>267</sup> For תכלית שרי, cf. Neh. 3:21; Job 26:10, 28:3; Ps. 139:22.

<sup>268</sup> Driver and Gray (1921: 108).

If we are to deduce anything concerning Sheol in this passage, it is simply that, as the underworld, Sheol is deep below the earth. There is little to suggest anything more sinister in relation to the wicked apart from Zophar's judgment of Job as guilty (11:1-6) and nor are the dead mentioned. This occurrence seems to be limited to its figurative use as an extremity. The emphasis then is on God's inscrutable wisdom and depth, which is also a standard theme in wisdom literature (cf. Prov. 25:3; 30:4).<sup>269</sup>

### 5.1.3. Job 14:13

*O that you would store me away in Sheol,  
that you would conceal me until your anger has turned back,  
that you would appoint for me a time, and remember me.*

Chapter 14 is the final section of a larger speech of Job beginning in chapter 12, where there are various themes already encountered including the transience of human life and finality of death.<sup>270</sup> However, in 14:13, Job expresses a desire to be hidden in Sheol, but interestingly only as a liminal state until God's anger has ceased (עַד-שׁוּב אַפַּי). In the context of the book of Job, and indeed the broader biblical context for Sheol, this is unusual. Job's hope for restoration to his former right standing with God is not unusual, of course. However, his wish to return from death at a future time, and to be remembered by God, is only a very short leap to the concept of resurrection. Indeed, in Job's earlier statements regarding the hope of a tree in 14:7-9, return from death is the underlying theme behind the tree that is cut down (עֹד יִחְלִיף 'will again sprout' in 14:7b). However, this is, of course, contrasted with the certainty and finality of death for humans from which there is no return.<sup>271</sup> Job's hope for

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<sup>269</sup> Habel (1985: 208).

<sup>270</sup> Whybray (1998: 77).

<sup>271</sup> Job 7:9 is often linked with the common Mesopotamian notion of the concept of a land-of-no-return. So, for example: Dhorme (1967: 103); Habel (1985: 161); Hartley (1988: 147n); Wright (2003: 96-98).

ultimate justice may also be seen as a faint echo of the sentiment in 1 Sam. 2:6 that God's authority and power transcend the impossibility of return, even if Job does not believe it to be possible. That being said, while the language in verse 13 does relate well to what we understand of later notions of resurrection, the context indicates that Job's expressed hope is rather an unattainable wish.

For 13a, the common form of expressing a wish, *מִי יִתֵּן* 'O that/If only' (see GK §151 a-b), occurs twenty-five times in the HB.<sup>272</sup> The LXX also understands *מִי יִתֵּן* in 13a as an expression of wish and adds *ὄφελον*.<sup>273</sup> The importance of the expression in relation to Sheol is that it affirms the permanence of death already spoken of by Job; that is, *מִי יִתֵּן* does not denote a request but an unattainable wish. This is overwhelmingly clear from the context (verses 1-2, 5, 10, 12 and 19-20) with the emphasis on humanity's impermanence, along with the permanence of death for mortals.

For the wish itself of being stored away in Sheol, the LXX understands the hiphil 2<sup>nd</sup> person imperfects of *נָפַן* and *סָתַר* as 2<sup>nd</sup> person aorist indicatives: *ἐφύλαξας* 'had kept'; *ἔκρυψας* 'had concealed': *εἰ γὰρ ὄφελον ἐν ᾗδῃ με ἐφύλαξας* 'If only/I wish that you had kept me in Hades'.<sup>274</sup> Though this rendering of the Hebrew imperfect seems to obscure the subjunctive sense of the MT, as if Job had already been in Hades, it does occur three other times in the LXX with the aorist indicative in Ex. 16:3 and Num. 14:2, 20:3.

For 13b, Dhorme (1967: 201) notes that the use of *שׁוּב* in relation to *אֵף* implies appeasement (cf. Gen. 22:44-45; Isa. 5:25). However, there is nothing in the passage offered by Job that might be said to appease God's anger apart from Job's actual innocence. Another possible interpretation here is that, given Job's determination that he is innocent, *שׁוּב* may represent a turning back of God's anger

<sup>272</sup> Ex. 16:3; Num. 11:29; Deut. 5:29, 28:67 [2x]; Judg. 9:29; 2 Sam. 19:1; Jer. 8:23; Pss. 14:7 [= 53:7], 55:7; Job 6:8, 11:5, 13:5, 14:4, 14:13, 19:23 [2x], 23:3, 31:31, 35. Four times with a suffix: Isa. 27:4 (*מִי יִתְּנֵנִי*); Jer. 9:1 (*מִי יִתְּנֵנִי*); Job 29:2 (*מִי יִתְּנֵנִי*); Song 8:1 (*מִי יִתְּנֵנִי*).

<sup>273</sup> BDAG (743) defines *ὄφελον* as a particle introducing an unattainable wish – "O that, would that" (cf. for example, the use of *ὄφελον* at Ex. 16:3 [*מִי יִתֵּן*]; Num. 14:2 [*לִי*], 20:3 [*לִי*]; Ps. 119:5 [*אֲחֻלֵּי*]).

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Pss. 27:5, 31:21.

(cf. Ex. 4:21; Josh. 2:16), or a kind of divine repentance. Elsewhere, God's relenting, repentance, or change of mind is normally expressed by way of נָחַם (cf. Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:11, 29, 35; Jon. 3:10), even if, problematically, divine repentance is both denied and affirmed in these passages.<sup>275</sup>

Job's hope to be remembered in 14c pertains to his innocence. The hope to be remembered by God is often expressed in the imperative, but also in the context of suffering some injustice with the hope of restoration or vindication (cf. Judg. 16:28; 1 Sam. 1:11; Jer. 15:15; Pss. 25:7, 106:4; Neh. 6:14, 13:14, 22, 31). As in verse 5, the noun קָרַן in this context suggests a limit or boundary. In verse 5 it is the limit of one's life, whereas here, it is the limit of Job's suffering or his sojourn in Sheol that he hopes for, and at which point he desires to be remembered.<sup>276</sup>

To be hidden away in Sheol in order to somehow escape, or perhaps sleep through the wrath of God, is unique, and there is an ironic side to Job's plea. Job is the only example of anyone properly wishing to be in Sheol, because ironically, to be alive in his condition is far less tolerable. Implicitly, Job's desire to ultimately be restored to a life without God's anger is a matter of justice; for him to die and be stored away in Sheol would be preferable to a life lived under the wrath of God, which he views as unjust and unwarranted. Restoration to life is perhaps the only reasonable hope at his current juncture. In verse 13, there is at once an expectation that he will ultimately find himself in Sheol, especially in light of previous statements about the impermanence of human life, but also a hope that in remembering Job, God would "resume his former benevolent attitude towards him".<sup>277</sup> Perhaps figuratively, it is precisely God's benevolent attitude towards Job that is spoken of here as being revived rather than Job's actual corpse. Sheol is simply preferable to Job's current abject misery in life. Therefore, 14:13 is best viewed as hyperbolic. This also underscores the nature of the text as a large poem addressing certain existential and theological problems, where the question of an afterlife

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<sup>275</sup> Moberly (2013:110-111).

<sup>276</sup> Dhorme (1967: 201).

<sup>277</sup> Whybray (1998: 78).

or future life is questioned but left unanswered. Certainly, Job's question in 14:14, '*if a man dies, will he yet live?*', does not receive an answer in the affirmative. Verses 14b-17 affirm Job's wish that a positive future life could be his reality, but a negative answer is implied. However, this is not an explicit denial of the possibility of return.

Notably, the topic of return or ultimate restoration is expressed elsewhere in the book by both Job (19:25-26) and Elihu (33:28-30). Importantly, 19:25-26 comes in the context of describing his terrible circumstances and the misery inflicted on him by God, so interpreting this well-known passage as an afterlife affirmation is problematic. Similarly, 33:28-30, while mentioning the return of one's soul or life (נפש) from the pit (שחת), is part of Elihu's speech and rebuke of Job. For this reason, to interpret this as a positive affirmation of return or resurrection is likewise problematic. However, while restoration and return are expressed in negative contexts, the notion of return is, nevertheless, present. Furthermore, Job is ultimately restored. While his restoration is not a true resurrection, these aspects of the text, along with 14:13, are possible antecedents for later resurrection.

#### 5.1.4. Job 17:13, 16

<sup>13</sup> *If I hope for Sheol as my house, I have spread my couch in the darkness,*

<sup>16</sup> *It will go down to the bars of Sheol, if together will we rest upon the dust?*

The two occurrences of Sheol in chapter 17 fall together in a larger speech of Job beginning at 16:1. This speech is in response to the preceding speech by Eliphaz the Temanite in chapter 15, wherein Eliphaz harshly rebukes Job and accuses him of breaking faith by nullifying his fear of the divine and withdrawing from meditation or study before God (verse 4: תפר יראה ותגרע שיחה לפני-אל). He then states that Job's own mouth condemns him (verse 6: ירשיעך פוך). Eliphaz charges Job with obstinacy and an unwillingness to repent or turn from darkness, which becomes a theme in Job's

rebuttal. He is judged to be suffering because he is wicked and godless, yet he maintains his innocence. In this light, the occurrences of Sheol that follow appear sardonic coming from Job in that he mocks their judgment of him. Additionally, verse 16 contains the noun עֶפֶר, which here appears to be synonymous with Sheol.

For 13a, the conditional אִם is only given once in this section (verses 13-15), yet the English translational consensus repeats “if” for each successive line (13b-14) with verses 15-16 forming an apodosis.<sup>278</sup> However, it is also possible to read the apodosis from 13b: ‘*If I hope for Sheol as my house, [then] I have spread my couch in the darkness; to the pit, I have called...*’ etc.<sup>279</sup> In this way, Job’s response may be construed as part of his defence. He maintains his innocence, yet if he were to hope for Sheol then he would be conceding guilt. Hays (2013: 227) interprets 17:13-15 as Job abandoning his previously held idea of embracing death, which earlier commentators have noted. On אִקוּהָ in relation to Sheol, along with the following references to ‘hope’ in verse 15, Habel (1985: 278) sees this as a reflection on Job’s discussion of hope in chapter 14. Here, however, hope is abandoned.

חֹשֶׁךְ is a keyword in 13b, and is a direct response to the three times darkness is mentioned in the speech of Eliphaz in chapter 15, which he directs at Job and his apparent wickedness and refusal to repent:

<sup>22</sup> לֹא־יֵאֱמִין שׁוּב מִנִּי־חֹשֶׁךְ ‘*he will not trust returning from darkness*’

<sup>23</sup> יָדַע כִּי־נִכּוֹן בְּיָדוֹ יוֹם־חֹשֶׁךְ ‘*He knows, for it is ready in his hand, a day of darkness*’

<sup>30</sup> לֹא־יִסּוֹר מִנִּי־חֹשֶׁךְ ‘*He will not turn aside from darkness*’.

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<sup>278</sup> See NRSV/RSV; NKJV; ESV; NEB; NIV. The KJV, however, reads the apodosis beginning with Sheol in 13a: “If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in darkness...”.

<sup>279</sup> LXX: ἐὰν γὰρ ὑπομείνω, ᾗδης μου ὁ οἶκος ‘*Even if I endure, Hades is my house*’. Notably, Job 17:13 is the only instance in the HB where Sheol is explicitly referred to as a house. Seow (2013: 766).

Job's mention of darkness in verse 13 may then be viewed as derisive in the sense of spurning Eliphaz's judgment of him as unrepentant; that is, instead of viewing 17:13-14 as a mere statement about his present condition, Job is asserting that he is innocent yet demonstrates his awareness of the consequences for stubbornly refusing to turn from darkness.

Verses 14 and 15 also contain important details relating to the underworld. Verse 14 is part of Job's conditional statement beginning in verse 13. If Job calls the pit (שְׁהוֹל) his father and the worms his mother and sister, then again he concedes guilt and that he belongs in Sheol. Seow (2013: 769) suggests that the phrases 'You are my father' and 'my mother and my sister' are declarations of allegiance and familial love, respectively.

As mentioned above, the parallel clauses in verse 16 make use of עֵפֶר as a Sheol synonym. This is also reflected in the LXX, which translates this as a disjunctive clause with the interrogative expressed adverbially with ἤ followed by a disjunctive conditional ἤ: ἤ μετ' ἐμοῦ εἰς ἄδην καταβήσονται, ἢ ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐπὶ χώματος καταβησόμεθα 'Will they go down with me into Hades, or shall we descend of one accord upon the mound?'. χῶμα "earth thrown up, bank, mound – sepulchral mound", in this case, is used for עֵפֶר. It occurs ten other times in the LXX with one other possible allusion to one lying dead on the dust at Job 20:11.<sup>280</sup>

The portrayal of Sheol in Job 17:13-16 is as the underworld in the classical sense. Sheol is the house of the dead (verse 13), and a worm-ridden pit of corruption (verse 14). Job's very hope will descend with him to the bars of Sheol (בְּרֵי שַׁאֲלַי תְּהִרְדְּנָה).<sup>281</sup> While it is expected that Job will eventually die and enter the grave, or perhaps Sheol, these verses are set within the context of one of Job's own speeches, and one where he maintains his innocence. If he concedes that Sheol is his house,

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<sup>280</sup> Liddell & Scott: 2014. Ex. 8:16-17 (2x); Josh. 8:28; Isa. 25:2; Ezek. 21:27; Hab. 1:10; Job 14:19; Job 20:11 (καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ χώματος κοιμηθήσεται 'and it will sleep with him upon the mound'); Job 22:24; Job 28:6.

<sup>281</sup> For בְּרֵי/בָרֵד 'bar/bars of' in connection with Sheol, see excursus on Jon. 2:7 at 3.2.5.

then he concedes guilt and agrees with those who condemn him. In this way, Job 17:13-16 may support an interpretation that also sees Sheol as the destiny of the unrighteous. However, this may also highlight a difference in the way one speaks about the respective deaths of the righteous and unrighteous. In other words, Sheol, with its attendant phraseology and dark details, is only appropriate when speaking about the deaths of the unrighteous, the enemies of God, or deathly circumstances.

### 5.1.5. Job 21:13

*They use up their days in goodness, and in a moment they go down to Sheol.*

In 15:20-35, Eliphaz describes the kind of life and judgment experienced by the wicked. In 21:7-13, Job answers this by asserting that the wicked indeed prosper before ending up in Sheol.<sup>282</sup> Job views this as unjust and unfair, as he maintains his innocence. He then continues his speech through verses 14-26 pondering the prosperity of the wicked and their recalcitrance towards God. He concludes this section of his speech saying that both those who prosper in life (verses 23-24) and those who suffer in life (verse 25) lie down together in the dust where worms cover them. This section is, of course, referring to the prosperity of the wicked specifically, but in light of the above, the occurrence of Sheol in verse 13 seems to indicate that in this context, the post-mortem destiny of Sheol is the same for all.

For 13a, the piel of בָּלָה refers to using something to the point of wearing it out. This has a positive force here, where the wicked are using up or spending their days in happiness and goodness (cf. Isa. 65:22). Another piel example in connection with Sheol is Ps. 49:15, but there בָּלָה refers to wasting away in Sheol (see 4.1.7.).<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Seow (2013: 870-71).

<sup>283</sup> BDB: 115. LXX: συνετέλεσαν δὲ ἐν ἀγαθοῖς τὸν βίον αὐτῶν ‘*They finished their life in goodness*’.

If we understand the noun רגע in 13b to refer to a brief moment (וּבְרֵגַע ‘and in a moment’), it may indicate that Job refers to their deaths as quick and painless.<sup>284</sup> In contrast to Job’s prolonged suffering as a righteous man, the prosperous wicked not only enjoy a blessed life, but also a quick end commensurate with that life. Michel (1987: 162), however, understands רגע here as “tranquillity”, reflecting a common understanding of the noun in this passage.<sup>285</sup> Michel also sees this as an epithet for Sheol in light of his interpretation of רגע in Job 7:5 being one of three nouns (רמה, עפר, רגע) that he interprets as referring to death and the underworld. However, one understands רגע in 21:13, it seems that the death of the affluent and happy scoffers is a good one, which underscores the injustice of Job’s suffering.

For the descent into Sheol (שְׁאוֹל יִהְיוּ), we have the verb נחת instead of the normal Sheol descent verb, ירד. נחת also appears to be an Aramaism.<sup>286</sup> The MT’s dagesh forte in the pausal form of יִהְיוּ indicates an emphatic (GK §20*i*). The only other occurrence of נחת that seems to be construed as a descent is found in Job 17:16. This meaning in 17:16 is supported by the LXX with the repeated verb καταβαίνω. In 21:13b, however, the LXX understands נחת according to the Hebrew meaning of ‘rest’: ἐν δὲ ἀναπαύσει ἄδου ἐκοιμήθησαν ‘In the rest of Hades they fall asleep’.<sup>287</sup> That being said, both the Aramaic meaning of ‘descent’ and the Hebrew meaning of ‘rest’, are possible readings here.

The occurrence of Sheol in Job 21:13 refers to the wicked. In light of the preceding material, it may be implied that, given the unjust prosperity of the wicked, they will therefore justly end up in Sheol. This would render Sheol as a place reserved for the unrighteous but this would also be an

<sup>284</sup> BDB: 921; HALOT: 1189 (—1. **quiet, calm period of time**). Cf. Eccl. 9:12 and Job 34:20a.

<sup>285</sup> So for example, NRSV, ESV, NIV. Also the LXX: ἐν δὲ ἀναπαύσει ἄδου ἐκοιμήθησαν ‘in the rest of Hades, they sleep’.

<sup>286</sup> BDB: 639.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Eccl. 6:5 – where it refers to the rest of death for a stillborn child.

oversimplification. Final rest in Sheol is also part of their prosperity: יבֹּלוּ בַטּוֹב יְמֵיהֶם ‘*They use up their days in goodness*’, or, their long and prosperous life is matched with a peaceful death as an ideal end. The injustice is that wicked people prosper and die in peace, whereas Job, a righteous man, has lost everything in this life and expects to die in abject misery. However, this does not necessarily reflect an Israelite belief about Sheol in the biblical period, as this is part of Job’s complaint. He observes that the wicked prosper in life and then rest in Sheol but also that there are others who suffer in life and likewise lie in the dust and rot. In this way, Sheol in 21:13 is synonymous with death that comes to all, as well as the common grave. Additionally, in verse 26, עֵפֶר functions as the shared grave of all, which further demonstrates that עֵפֶר can be synonymous with Sheol in a comparable manner to its other synonyms.

#### **5.1.6. Job 24:19**

*Drought, as well as heat, steal away the snow waters; so does Sheol those who have sinned.*

The occurrence of Sheol in 24:19 falls in a larger speech of Job, where he details the wicked acts of oppressors and thieves. 24:18-20 then describes the demise of the wicked, and their lives being stolen away by Sheol.

Both Pope (1965: 195) and Dhorme (1967: 386-92) note the incongruity of this section regarding the fate of the wicked appearing in a speech of Job, where he seemingly affirms the argument of his opponents. For this reason, both scholars relocate the respective sections to the speech of Zophar in chapter 27. Dhorme removes verses 18-24 and inserts them after 27:13. Pope removes verses 18-20 and 22-25 and then inserts them after 27:23.

The LXX, in this instance, does not translate 24:19, but picks up on the theme of the wicked robbing orphans and the innocent, and reads it as a curse on the wicked who prey on the orphans:

ἀναφανείη δὲ τὰ φυτὰ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ξηρά· ἀγκαλίδα γὰρ ὀρφανῶν  
ἤρπασαν  
*‘May their plants appear withered upon the earth, for they have seized an  
orphan’s armful’.*

Though the Greek verse is a paraphrase, the LXX reads נִיִּי as part of a wish for judgment on the wicked oppressors and for the failure of their crops.<sup>288</sup> In the Hebrew, however, the reference to drought and heat (צִיָּה גַם־חֶם) in 19a is intended to convey the fragility of snow in heat, or in a parched land. The verb גָּזַל ‘to rob’ also appears in verses 2 and 9 to describe the wicked acts of those who seize flocks and steal orphan children to make as slaves. For the comparative part of the clause in 19b, שְׂאוּל הַטָּאוֹר ‘Sheol those who have sinned’,<sup>289</sup> a thirsty and parched land snatching away snow waters relates well with Sheol’s greed and insatiability, as we find in Prov. 27:20 and 30:16 (see 6.1.8. and 6.1.9. below). In this instance, it seems that the wicked cannot abide in life any more than snow in heat and drought.

Sheol in 24:19 then, is certainly aligned with the wicked in the sense of being some form of the inevitable end for sinners, thieves, and those who prey on the weak and defenceless. This may indicate a premature death for the wicked. Or perhaps the metaphor of drought and heat stealing away the snow waters seems to imply a comparable notion of the transience of human life to that of 7:9. Only here, it is specifically the lives of sinners whose end is swift, which is the consequence of their wicked deeds. In this way, this example of Sheol is also similar to the function of Sheol in Proverbs. The incongruity, perhaps deliberate, is that Job seems to affirm the quick demise and judgment on sinners leaving a

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<sup>288</sup> Cf. Jer. 50:12; Hos. 2:5.

<sup>289</sup> Note the comparative without the conjunction. See GK §161a.

question mark over his own adversity. However, Job's suffering is prolonged, as Satan was not given permission to kill him (2:6). It may be that Job notes the incongruity himself as part of his defence and maintaining his innocence.

### 5.1.7. Job 26:6

*Naked is Sheol before him, and there is no covering for Abaddon.*

This final occurrence of Sheol is part of Job's response to the pessimistic retort of Bildad the Shuhite, where Bildad attempts to trump Job's protest of innocence by stating that it is impossible for anyone to be pure and righteous before God. In response, Job trumps Bildad's understanding with a series of pithy theological statements that portray God as the master of every possible domain and creature both living and dead.

As we have seen throughout this study of Sheol, YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and ultimate authority is a theme that occurs frequently in relation to Sheol.<sup>290</sup> Here, we are told that Sheol and Abaddon are naked (ערום) before God and exposed. God, in other words, has perfect knowledge of all space, including the underworld.

Abaddon itself occurs six times in the HB and three times in Job (Prov. 15:11, 27:20; Job 26:6, 28:22, 31:12; Ps. 88:12). Of the six occurrences of Abaddon, two contain a pairing with Sheol: Job 26:6, Prov. 15:11, 27:20.<sup>291</sup> In Job 28:22, Abaddon parallels death (Heb: מָוֶת; Gk: θάνατος). This appears in a discussion of the value of wisdom and the mystery of its whereabouts. Johnston (2002: 85) suggests that pairing Abaddon and Sheol might reflect a custom of pairing lesser deities (at Ugarit,

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<sup>290</sup> Num. 16:30-33; Deut. 32:22; 1 Sam. 2:6; Isa. 7:11, 14:9, 11, 15; Hos. 13:14; Am. 9:2; Ps. 139:8; Job 14:13; Prov. 15:11.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Ps. 88:12. There, Abaddon is parallel with קֶבֶר. Ps. 88 is also replete with underworld phraseology (see 4.1.10.).

for example) but notes that Sheol and Abaddon are not divinized in the biblical passages. In this way, the connection may only be an “echo” of this custom.<sup>292</sup>

Some scholars prefer a separation of 26:1-4 from the rest of the chapter.<sup>293</sup> The initial four verses clearly stand apart from the series of theological statements that follow in verses 5-13. However, Job’s sardonic mention of his friend’s counsel and advice at the beginning of the chapter contrast with God’s perfect knowledge of all things, which makes perfect sense of Job’s speech. This is especially clear in light of his concluding remark in verse 14 and the final rhetorical question: מִי יִתְבּוֹנֵן ‘*who can understand?*’.

The mention of the Rephaim in verse 5 is notable. Even the dead Rephaim tremble at God’s presence. The LXX and other Greek versions (Vulg., Theod., Symm.) translate הַרְפָּאִים as giants (γίγαντας), which Gordis (1978: 277) understands as a preservation of the memory of the ancient myth, especially from Ugarit. Their mention, however, reflects the theological theme of this section, that God has perfect knowledge of and authority over all space. Whether the Rephaim in verse 5 are the ethnic Rephaim of long ago or the shades of the dead, makes little difference to the intent of the verse. They are the denizens of the underworld.

Job 26:6 is a declaration of God’s ultimate authority, omnipresence and omniscience belonging to a series of statements with cosmological significance in verses 5-14. Job’s statement here is part of his attempt at shooting down the argument of Bildad by asserting his own knowledge and awareness of God’s authority, as well as maintaining his innocence in light of his theology. The wider theological thrust is that YHWH has ultimate authority over all things both living and dead.

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<sup>292</sup> See also: Tromp (1969: 81) regarding the Ugaritic phrase *mt w shr* “Death and Rot”.

<sup>293</sup> So Gordis (1978: 273, 534-35); Dhorme (1967: 370-76).

## 5.2. SUMMARY

Throughout the text of Job, the mention of death and the underworld is appropriately dark. On the lips of Job himself, Sheol conveys hopelessness (7:9), yet Job ponders hope of a return therefrom (14:13). In chapter 17, Job maintains his innocence, but if he looks to Sheol as his rightful home, then he concedes guilt (verse 13). He then questions the very fate of his hope itself (verses 15-16). In 21:13 and 24:19, Sheol is the expected end of the unrighteous, and is spoken of as premature. In 11:8, however, Zophar is the speaker, and Sheol is not directly linked with anything deathly or dark. As in Isa. 7:11, Sheol is the greatest conceivable depth in the cosmos. In 26:6, Sheol alongside Abaddon is the underworld but is naked before God. The context is a series of theological statements concerning the ultimate authority, omnipresence and omniscience of God.

Job is a righteous man questioning the benevolence of the divine in light of his extreme loss, grief, distress and various afflictions. In one sense, Job is in Sheol already; he experiences the hopelessness, gloom, lifelessness, and separation from God in his present state. Importantly, in these few passages, we have learned that Sheol in Job is aligned with the wicked, premature death and divine judgment, and like the psalmists, Job himself experiences the pangs of Sheol while yet alive.

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## SHEOL IN THE LIGHT OF WISDOM

### 6.1. PROVERBS

There are nine occurrences of Sheol in the book of Proverbs. In light of the overall concern for right moral and ethical conduct, and the attainment of wisdom, these nine occurrences of Sheol consistently function either as a negative and fearful consequence of immorality and folly, or traditional features of death and the underworld are made to serve the overall didactic function of the book.

The most pertinent issues to be discussed in this chapter concern a) whether Sheol exhibits a distinctive function in a sapiential context, and b) whether these occurrences are functionally consistent with the consensus view of Sheol as the underworld. In addition, the single occurrences of Sheol in Eccl. 9:10 and Song 8:6 are also included in this chapter for their traditional association with the wisdom tradition.

#### 6.1.1. Prov. 1:12

*Like Sheol, let us swallow them alive and whole like those who descend into the pit.*

The first occurrence of Sheol in the book of Proverbs appears unique in the book,<sup>294</sup> and The father's

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<sup>294</sup> In each of the nine occurrences of Sheol in Proverbs, the LXX translates it as Hades. In the LXX of Proverbs, Hades occurs in three other passages (2:18; 14:12; 16:25), where it is used to render מוֹת or רַפְאִים.

imaginary discourse utilizes an evocative vocabulary that is especially relevant to the discussion of Sheol. Beginning in verse 8, the admonition given to the son to listen to his father's instruction and his mother's teaching, and not to consent to the enticement of sinners, is followed by the father's discourse where sinners attempt to recruit the son into their gang and to lie in wait with them for innocent blood.

First, the father's injunction against complicity with sinners incorporates an imaginary scenario where wicked men seek to entice the son to join them and aspire to be *like* Sheol swallowing the innocent alive and whole. The swallowing verb here is בִּלְע<sup>295</sup> and the passage is reminiscent of the demise of Korah and his followers in Num. 16, where the earth swallows the rebels and they descend alive into Sheol, along with all their possessions. Prov. 1:12 and Hab. 2:5 are the only two occurrences of Sheol in the HB bearing the כּ preposition. However, Prov. 1:12 is the only instance where a person or character wishes to be like, or impersonate, Sheol.

Waltke (2004: 190) notes that the father's discourse here is designed to expose the sinners and condemn them by including in their speech incriminating words. By describing themselves as Sheol, and their victims as "innocent", the sinners expose their own wickedness. This unique use of Sheol, along with the possible allusion to Korah's destruction, may then be viewed as a deliberate device in the father's imaginary discourse purposefully designed as a deterrent.

Elsewhere in the HB, Sheol is depicted as consuming and opening its mouth or described as having a mouth, an appetite, being greedy, or unsatisfied. Isa. 5:14 (an open mouth and enlarged appetite); Ps. 141:7 (bones scattered at the mouth of Sheol); Hab. 2:5 (greed as wide as Sheol); Prov. 27:20 (Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied) and 30:16 (never satisfied with water, never says, "Enough"). However, only two occurrences of the term involve the direct use of בִּלְע where Sheol is the subject of the verb: Prov. 1:12 and Num. 16:30.

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Cook (1997: 72), however, does not count Prov. 2:18 as a proper occurrence of Hades in reference to the underworld, as it is a plus and not a rendering of the Hebrew text.

<sup>295</sup> For בִּלְע the LXX consistently uses καταπίνω (Cook, 1997: 71).

There are, however, other notable examples of בלע in connection with death with possible allusions to the underworld. In Isa. 25:8, God swallows up death forever. This is, of course, a reversal of the effect of death, and, perhaps implicitly, Sheol. In Ps. 69:16, the psalmist prays to be spared from being swallowed up (בלע) by the deep (מצולה) or having the mouth of the pit (באר) closed over him. Like בור in Prov. 1:12, באר more commonly refers to a well or bitumen pit. However, it is considered a Sheol synonym for its clear allusions to the underworld here, at Ps. 69:16 and also in Ps. 55:24.<sup>296</sup>

In Num. 16:33, the rebels descend alive (חיים) into Sheol. Here, חיים refers to the state of the innocent when swallowed by the sinners. Both בלע and חיים, along with Sheol, describe similar forms of death for Korah and his followers in Num. 16:30-33 and for the innocent victims in Prov. 1:12. Ps. 55:16 also contains a related phrase: ירדו שאול חיים ‘*let them descend alive into Sheol*’ (see 4.1.8).<sup>297</sup>

The phrase חיים ותמימים ‘*alive and whole/complete*’ is how the sinners desire to swallow their innocent victims. The adjective תמימים can refer to being perfect, complete or intact, or faultless and without blemish.<sup>298</sup> It is also frequently used of unblemished animals for sacrifice (cf. Ex. 12:5, 29:1; Lev. 1:3, 10). In their attempt to recruit the son by appealing to greed and a desire for wealth, the enticers state (verse 13) that ‘*we will find all their precious wealth; we will fill our homes with spoil*’. A connection with Num. 16 may be further clarified here, as the people of Korah are swallowed up along with everything that belongs to them (וְאֵת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם).

The phrase, יורדי בור ‘*those who descend into the pit*’, is clearly a negative phrase and appears to refer to the wicked as those who descend. However, of the sixteen occurrences of this phrase in the HB, Prov. 1:12 is the only instance where it is properly applied to the innocent. Elsewhere, the psalmist

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<sup>296</sup> Johnston (2002: 83-84).

<sup>297</sup> Interestingly, in the context of Ps. 55 (verses 13-14), the psalmist refers to one who was not an enemy but was once a friend with whom he shared ‘*sweet counsel*’ and walking with God. Korah, a Levite (Num. 16:1), was also allied with Moses and Aaron before his rebellion against them and subsequent demise.

<sup>298</sup> HALOT: 1749.

laments that he is counted among those who descend (Ps. 88:5). He also desires not to be like them (Pss. 28:1 and 143:7) and praises God for restoring his life/soul from among them (Ps. 30:4). Here, the enticers aspire to be *like* Sheol and swallow the innocent, so that their victims will be like *‘those who descend into the pit’*. This phrase applied to the innocent is intentionally incongruous. The two כ prepositions in 1:12 form a parallel. In 12a, the enticers are *like* Sheol as the swallows of the innocent, as if meting out what is otherwise a form of divine judgment. In 12b, they mistakenly liken their victims with those who go down to Sheol. If we understand the father’s technique of putting what is clearly perverted or backwards on the lips of the enticers, as a device intended as a deterrent from following them, then descent into Sheol is the implied ramification for them. This again would further bolster the connection with Num. 16, as Korah and his followers contended against Moses and Aaron, believing that YHWH was on their side (Num. 16:2-3).

There are approximately sixteen biblical occurrences of the phrase יִרְדּוּ בֹרַח.<sup>299</sup> However, the Greek fails to translate this phrase in 1:12. Instead, the LXX finishes this verse with the peculiar phrase καὶ ἄρωμεν αὐτοῦ τὴν μνήμην ἐκ γῆς *‘and we will remove his memorial out from the land’*. Does the LXX allude to Korah here?<sup>300</sup> Of all sixteen occurrences of this phrase in the MT, this interpretation in the LXX of Prov. 1:12 is unique. Given the shared vocabulary with Num. 16, the LXX’s paraphrase may be further support for this connection between these passages.

As we have seen, the speech of the sinners is crafted with deliberately incongruous ideas. They liken themselves to Sheol, desiring to swallow their victims alive and whole, and they liken the innocent to the wicked, as *‘those who descend into the pit’*. The sinners continue with the promise of wealth: *‘we will find all their precious wealth; we will fill our homes with spoil’*. The father continues,

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<sup>299</sup> Isa. 14:19, 38:18; Ezek. 26:20 (2x), 31:14, 16, 32:18, 24, 25, 29, 30; Pss. 28:1, 30:4, 88:5, 143:7; Prov. 1:12.

<sup>300</sup> In the LXX of Job 2:9, there is the phrase ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἠφάνισται σου τὸ μνημόσυνον ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς *‘Look! Indeed your memorial is hidden/destroyed from the earth’*. This is a plus in the LXX and does not render any Hebrew phrase. Furthermore, it is part of the expanded speech of Job’s wife but does not appear to have anything to do with Sheol.

spelling out the true nature of their folly and that the fate of their victims is ultimately reflected back onto them: *‘But these men for their own blood they lie in wait’*.

As discussed, the imagery and vocabulary of the father’s discourse appear to relate rather well with the events of Num. 16. Both passages contain occurrences of Sheol; both describe the fate of their respective victims as being swallowed with the use of the verb בלע; and both refer to the victims as descending alive (חיים) into the underworld. Furthermore, the desire of sinners for unjust gain and spoil is linked with the adjective תנאים, and this would also appear to echo the event in Num. 16, as Korah and his followers are swallowed up alive, along with all their possessions (וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם). In this way, the phrase יורדי בור functions as an allusion to the demise of the rebels in the wilderness and it is possibly used as a catchphrase elsewhere to describe people in a state of rebellion against God.

The occurrence of Sheol here is unique in likening people to the underworld. Waltke (2004: 116), however, prefers the NIV’s gloss of Sheol as “the grave”, but this seems to diminish the force of the language where the presence of Sheol serves to enhance the teaching. Alternatively, to gloss Sheol with “death” would be more fitting, given the many allusions to death swallowing its victims. If the imagery of the father’s imaginary scenario is in fact intended to allude to the demise of Korah and his followers, then the allusion to that shocking event similarly intensifies the father’s message. In this way, when reflected back onto the sinners in verses 18-19, Sheol functions here as an instrument of death and judgment.

### 6.1.2. Prov. 5:5

*Her feet descend unto death; her steps hold fast to Sheol.*

Sheol in Prov. 5:5 occurs in the context of an injunction against pursuing the strange woman or זרה. In this instance, while it may be an overstatement to say that Sheol itself constitutes punishment, it is

notable that death and Sheol are the consequence of pursuing wickedness, folly, and immorality. This occurrence is also unusual in its description of her steps seizing, following, or holding fast to Sheol (תִּמְךָ).<sup>301</sup>

Both רַגְלֶיהָ and צַעְדֶיהָ are metonyms for the path of the זָרָה (cf. Prov. 7:11 and 4:26-27).<sup>302</sup> Her steps, however, hold fast to the path of Sheol, which is a figurative way of saying that in pursuing her, and everything she represents, Sheol is inevitable (cf. Prov. 7:8 – וּדְרֹךְ בֵּיתָהּ יִצְעֵר – Fox (2000: 192) understands the use of תִּמְךָ here as emphatic, where the woman proceeds with “firm, secure strides to Sheol”. The expression also indicates that to follow her is to actively take part in holding fast to death and Sheol.

The LXX translation of 5:5 appears to explain the meaning of the saying by simply naming the strange woman ‘Folly’ and stating that she leads those who follow her down to death and Hades. The translators then expand the verse adding the phrase: τὰ δὲ ἴχνη αὐτῆς οὐκ ἐρείδεται ‘*Her steps are not fixed/secure*’. This anticipates verse 6 and the contrast with the path of life in 6a and her wandering in ignorance in 6b (נָעוּ מֵעַגְלָתֶיהָ לֹא תִדְעַ).<sup>303</sup>

Both Fox (2000: 192) and Waltke (2004: 310) see a possible connection with the god Mot in 5:5, but the immediate details and context do not support this in any obvious or direct way. A close comparison worth noting here is Prov. 2:18. There, Sheol is not mentioned but the underworld is clearly intended. Her house sinks down to death and the Rephaim are named in the parallel. In 2:18, מוֹת is translated in the LXX as Hades instead of the usual θάνατος (Cook, 1997: 72). Prov. 2:18 might be an even stronger link with Mot than the examples of 5:5 and 7:27, but neither Fox or Waltke

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<sup>301</sup> TWOT (2: 973); HALOT: 1751.

<sup>302</sup> Waltke (2004: 309).

<sup>303</sup> Cf. Prov. 7:11. There, the strange woman is described as being dressed like a prostitute (שִׁית זֹנָה) and her feet do not stay or dwell at home (בְּבֵיתָהּ לֹא יִשְׁכְּנוּ רַגְלֶיהָ). As a prostitute and adulteress, she is the definitive symbol of folly for young men and her path leads *down* to death (יִרְדּוּת מוֹת).

mention the above in support of viewing Mot in 5:5. Having said that, reading Mot into the passage ignores the basic fact that the figure in question is the זרה and everything she symbolizes and not death or Sheol, both of which are ancillary to the strange woman. The Hebraic connections with Ugarit notwithstanding, an allusion to Mot seems to be an imposition of extraneous notions, and nor is this helpful.

The זרה, as a benchmark symbol for folly, is depicted in chapter 5 as pursuing folly herself. She is a figurative character, the opposite of wisdom, but one representing a potential downfall for young men. In verse 6, we are told that she does not observe (פלט) the path of life (ארת חיים) and that she is unaware that her ways are unstable. Her steps hold fast (תמך) to Sheol, and in verse 6, she wanders or totters without knowledge. Sheol and the way to death – the path of folly – is the negative counterpart to the path of life.

### 6.1.3. Prov. 7:27

*The ways of Sheol are her house, going down to the chambers of death*

The occurrence of Sheol in 7:27 is comparable to 5:5. Both passages fall within the prologue (chapters 1-9) and share several lexical features. The זרה is the dominant figure in both. Moreover, with the use in both passages of the same feminine plural participle ירדוה, her feet and steps (5:5), ways and paths (7:25, 27), lead down to death and the chambers of death.

In the context, the ways of the זרה are consistently referred to in the plural, and in verse 27 her

house itself is described as the ‘*ways of Sheol*’ (דרכי שאול ביתה).<sup>304</sup> The admonition makes use of Sheol and the chambers of death as metaphors to illustrate the multifariousness of the danger surrounding her, and thus it is implied that there are many ways of falling victim to her seduction.

The translational consensus renders 27a in the singular as: “her house is the way to Sheol”.<sup>305</sup> However, the plural construct form of דרך is intended as the parallel to אלה-הדרים-מות in 27b. The importance of this is that the plural forms underscore the many dangers of the זרה. The text does not merely refer to a prostitute or adulterous woman. She is a symbol of what might be the most alluring of temptations to folly for young men, and the symbol encompassed all foolish ways that lead to death and Sheol. Furthermore, דרכי clearly links with the plural participle ירדות.

Understanding the plural construct of דרכי שאול as a parallel with the plural construct of אלה-הדרים-מות is essential to understanding the intended meaning of the verse in its context. The emphasis here is not on Sheol itself, but on the ways of Sheol, being the house of the adulteress, which is here a metaphor for the many ways that a young, naïve man might be deceived and seduced by foolishness.

The didactic concerns here are morality, ethical behaviour, and the pursuit of wisdom. Sheol is used here to illustrate what is sinister, undesirable, and consequential to wickedness and folly. Whether or not Sheol is the indiscriminate underworld with regard to the righteous or wicked is less relevant in the present context. One might even say that in this context at least, discord is precipitated by the notion of Sheol as the result for pursuing folly when ultimately Sheol is supposedly the fate of all people anyway. Rather, Sheol is a fate to be by following the path of life, heeding instruction, and behaving morally. Alternatively, Sheol stands for an untimely or premature death for pursuing folly, whereas the path of life and pursuit of wisdom leads to a long and prosperous life.

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<sup>304</sup> There is little difference between the LXX translation of 7:27 and the MT. The LXX understands the plural of the Hebrew construct דרכי שאול ‘*ways of Sheol*’ literally as ὁδοὶ ᾗδου ‘*roads of Hades*’.

<sup>305</sup> For example, ASV, RHE, NRSV, ESV, KJV, NKJV, NAS, and NIV. The majority of English translations follow this consensus. However, there are notable exceptions such as the YLT, WYC, and LEB.

#### 6.1.4. Prov. 9:18

*But he does not know that the dead are there, in the depths of Sheol, the ones she has called.*

The meaning and function of Sheol in Prov. 9:18 is to be determined not only by the content of the chapter but also from the carefully designed composition of the chapter. The composition displays a contrast between the calls of Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly, where verses 4, 5 and 6 correspond and counter verses 16, 17 and 18:

Verses 4 and 16:

<sup>4</sup> *Whoever is callow let him turn in here. To him who is without sense, she says:*  
מִי־פְתִי יִסֵּר הִנֵּה חֶסֶד־לֵב אָמְרָה לוֹ

<sup>16</sup> *Whoever is simple let him turn in here. And to him who is without sense, she says:*  
מִי־פְתִי יִסֵּר הִנֵּה וְחֶסֶד־לֵב וְאָמְרָה לוֹ

The only difference between these two lines is that 16b contains two waw conjunctions. Despite the agreement among some scholars that chapter 9 comes from a slightly different tradition, the invitation to the simple and foolish are comparable with the calls of Wisdom and Folly in Prov. 1:22 and 8:5.<sup>306</sup>

Verses 5 and 17:

<sup>5</sup> *‘Come eat of my bread, and drink the wine I have mixed’*  
לִכּוּ לַחֲמֹו בִלְחַמִּי וּשְׁתּוּ בַיַּיִן מִסַּכְתִּי

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<sup>306</sup> Whybray (1994: 43).

<sup>17</sup> *‘Stolen water is sweet, and secret/hidden bread is pleasant’*

מים־גנובים ימתקו ולחם סתרים ינעם

These two lines are different but both constitute an invitation to partake of Wisdom’s bread and wine, or Folly’s stolen water and secret bread. To partake of Lady Wisdom’s bread and mixed wine is clearly an invitation to gain wisdom, knowledge and understanding. This is spelt out in the following verse (cf. Isa. 55:1- 3).<sup>307</sup> Similarly, though Lady Folly’s invitation to drink stolen water and eat bread in secret alludes to illicit pleasures, as a parallel, it is not implausible that folly and wicked behaviour might also include crooked and false teachings as well.<sup>308</sup>

Verses 6 and 18

<sup>6</sup> *‘Leave callowness behind and live, and walk in the way of insight’*

עזבו פתאים וחיו ואשרו בדרך בינה

<sup>18</sup> *‘He does not know that the dead are there, in the depths of Sheol, the ones she has called’*

ולא־ידע כִּי־רפאים שם בעמקי שאול קראיה

Interestingly, even though 6 and 18 do not seem to readily correspond with one another, the parallel may be evident in פתאים when compared with רפאים, where these two nouns are perhaps intended to assonate with one another. In this way, the abandonment of “callowness”, as Fox (2000:

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<sup>307</sup> Waltke (2004: 437).

<sup>308</sup> In the LXX pluses for 9:18, the river Styx may be alluded to in the passing over a strange/foreign river in 18βb: οὕτως γὰρ διαβήσῃ ὕδωρ ἀλλότριον καὶ ὑπερβήσῃ ποταμὸν ἀλλότριον *‘For indeed you will cross strange water, and cross over a strange river’*. This is, of course, significant in the context of Hades (Cook, 1997: 284-85). The translator’s additions are indeed peculiar, but the reference to “foreign waters” may be a deliberate attempt to bolster the effect of the injunction relating also to foreign teachings, doctrines or perhaps Hellenistic philosophy. In this way, Lady Folly becomes a symbol of foreign pollutants that are more than mere warnings against sexual immorality and illicit activities.

295) translates פתאים in verse 6,<sup>309</sup> where those who are simple then live and walk in the way of insight (וַחַיּוּ וְאָשְׁרוּ בַדֶּרֶךְ בִּינָה) contrasts with the dead being *there* (כִּי־רַפְאִים שָׁם) in the depths of Sheol. In other words, Sheol is meant to be understood as the obverse of the path of life, as in Prov. 5:5 and 23:14. Furthermore, the imperative “abandon/leave behind” (עֲזֹבוּ) in verse 6, suggests that those Lady Wisdom addresses are in fact pursuing or embracing callowness.<sup>310</sup> In this way, it would seem that the intended understanding of either the way of wisdom or the way of folly, is that what takes place on either path is a present action with its own rewards or consequences, rather than a future state of beatification or punishment.

Finally, chapter 9 of Proverbs features a contrast between two figurative women: Lady Wisdom (9:1-6) and Lady Folly (9:13-18). The presence of Lady Folly, as the wicked counterpart of Lady Wisdom, underscores the fact that details contained in the parallels between verses 4, 5 and 6, and 16, 17 and 18, are not to be read as literal meals, and literal women and so on. Nor would it make sense to read the description of Lady Folly and her house, along with the רַפְאִים and Sheol as somehow representing literal realities when everything surrounding Lady Wisdom remains figurative.

Lady Folly’s guests, the ones she has called, are in the depths of Sheol. It seems clear from the context that this expression is akin to modern expressions such as “I am as one dead” or that one is “dead already”. Moreover, as this phrase parallels verse 6, the idea is that Lady Folly’s guests, men who are callow and pursuing folly, are men who are presently in the depths of Sheol. They are not literally there but *there* (שָׁם) is the key term. It would seem to indicate that Sheol is something of a state of being, and in this way, folly functions as the counterpart to the way of insight (בַּדֶּרֶךְ בִּינָה).

The vocabulary surrounding Lady Folly, such as רַפְאִים, מִי־גִנוּבִים and שְׂאוּל, is to be

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<sup>309</sup> In verse 13, Fox’s translation avoids the more common adjectival translation of the noun פְּתִיּוֹת as “seductive”, and instead more favourably reflects the Hebrew by rendering פְּתִיּוֹת as “callowness”. This also fits the context better, as the ones who are called are the senseless and uneducated.

<sup>310</sup> Fox (2000: 299).

understood as figurative. While this does not preclude the existence of early Israelite beliefs in a literal Sheol, it is possible that this passage represents a way of describing folly and wickedness that might be thought of as hyperbolic. In this way, Sheol in Prov. 9:18 is ontologically a this-worldly state of being that carries with it all the terrifying potential of being an otherworldly state also.

#### 6.1.5. Prov. 15:11

*Sheol and Abaddon are exposed before YHWH. How much more so are the hearts of the children of humankind!*

There are two occurrences of Sheol in chapter 15 of Proverbs. However, unlike the thematic connection of warnings against pursuing the **אִשֶׁה זָרָה** and folly, as we find between the occurrences of Sheol in 5:5, 7:27 and 9:18, each of the occurrences in chapter 15 would appear to be independent. The context of this chapter exhibits little that would tie these two verses together, and there are no conspicuous patterns or a discernable sequence of thought.<sup>311</sup> For instance, verses 1, 2 and 4 all relate wisdom and right behaviour to one's speech: **מַעֲנֵה דָבָר** 'a tender answer' in verse 1; **לְשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים** 'the tongue of the wise' in verse 2; and **מִרְפֵּא לְשׁוֹן** 'a healing tongue' in verse 4. However, while there is a clear thematic connection between these verses, there does not seem to be a discernable reason for the placement of verse 3. Rather, it appears to interrupt the cycle or sequence.

While there does not appear to be a clear rationale behind the ordering of this collection in chapter 15, there are repeated ideas. Whybray (1994: 103-6) notes the theological flavour of this chapter, due to the nine occurrences of the name of God. Prov. 15:11 certainly appears to be a theological statement about God's omnipotence and omniscience and is comparable to verse 3. Having said that, God's omnipresence and omniscience are familiar themes in wisdom literature. Similar

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<sup>311</sup> Murphy (1998: 111).

statements can be found in Job 26:6 and 31:4, along with chapters 38 and 39 of Job, both of which are devoted entirely to God’s speech concerning the divine sovereignty and complete knowledge of all things.

In light of God’s sovereignty and omniscience, the two most important features of 15:11 are Abaddon and the human heart. Abaddon and Sheol are compared to the human heart here, as both are unknown and hidden to humanity but not to God (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; Pss. 139, 44:22; 2 Chron. 6:30).

Abaddon itself appears almost exclusively in wisdom literature, with the exception of Ps. 88:12. The term occurs six times in the HB, where it is applied to the grave as an underworld term and proper noun suggestive of the place where one’s corpse perishes.<sup>312</sup> Twice it is coupled with Sheol: here at Prov. 15:11 and again in Prov. 27:20, which resembles 15:11 in its comparison of Sheol and Abaddon with human anatomy. Abaddon is also paralleled with Sheol in Job 26:6, which is a comparable passage to Prov. 15:11. The theme of Sheol’s nakedness or exposure before God is conveyed using the same preposition נגד, which might be viewed as the nucleus of this proverb. Here, נגד is perhaps best understood in the sense of exposure, and therefore, what is hidden to humans (the underworld or grave and the human heart) is manifest to YHWH.<sup>313</sup> Additionally, the emphatic construct אף כי in relation to the human heart further underscores the unknowable or hidden aspects of Sheol and Abaddon. The particle אף typically carries the adverbial meaning of “also, even”, and is used for emphasis. When followed by כי this forms an emphatic comparison “how much more so?”<sup>314</sup> Abaddon is also paralleled with the קבר at Ps. 88:12, which helps to ameliorate our understanding of both Sheol and Abaddon in connection with the grave and decomposition.

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<sup>312</sup> Tromp (1969: 81). Abaddon is likely derived from אבד – Qal “perish”; piel “cause to perish, destroy, kill”; hiphil “destroy, put to death”. See BDB: 1.

<sup>313</sup> The LXX reads φανερός “to being evident so as to be readily known, *visible, clear, plainly to be seen, open, plain, evident, known*” (BDAG: 1047). Cf. also Josh. 8:35; 2 Sam. 12:12; Ps. 38:10.

<sup>314</sup> HALOT: 76. Cf. Prov. 11:31; 2 Sam. 4:11 and 16:11.

Given the theological concerns and tone of chapter 15, as well as the significance of Abaddon as an aspect of the underworld relating to annihilation or destruction, it is appropriate to view Sheol in Prov. 15:11 as the otherworldly underworld and place of the dead. This is clarified by the pairing of Abaddon and Sheol, which may also be compared with *mt w shr* (Death-and-Rot) in Ugaritic texts.<sup>315</sup> This, of course, relates well with the grave and decomposition in a temporal sense, but the nakedness and exposure of the underworld to God seems to require something more to its function here. It is something mysterious, inexplicable and unknown to humans. In this way, the use of Sheol in 15:11 is figurative when likened to the human heart, but the most appropriate understanding is as the unknown and otherworldly underworld.

#### 6.1.6. Prov. 15:24

*The path of life<sup>316</sup> is upwards for the prudent, in order to turn<sup>317</sup> from Sheol below.*

The contrast between *מועלה* and *מוטה* appears to be the most salient issue for commentators in 15:24. McKane (1970: 479-80) seems to prefer a deletion of the two adverbs. He states that they are potentially later additions to the text, as they constitute a later theological antithesis of heaven and hell. He further argues that if one considers *ארתח חיים* as a this-worldly way of life, then “upwards” makes no sense in relation to it, as the opposition of “upwards” and “downwards” is only intelligible if the path of life refers to a blessed immortality, because presumably, Sheol denotes the otherworldly

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<sup>315</sup> Tromp (1969: 81).

<sup>316</sup> *ארתח חיים* also occurs in Ps. 16:11; Prov. 2:19, 5:6 and 15:24.

<sup>317</sup> The proper sense of *סור* is ‘turn aside’ from one’s course (BDB: 693). In the context of Proverbs, turning aside from Sheol beneath is turning away from a path of debasement and self-degradation.

underworld. Having said that, both McKane (1970: 479) and Whybray (1994: 234) note the improbability of such a belief here and highlight the fact that the LXX does not read the adverbs.<sup>318</sup>

Fox (2009: 601), on the other hand, has argued that למעלה is essential to the Hebrew syntax of the first line, and therefore, to delete מטה would render the proverb too short and abrupt. If this is the case, then structurally it makes good sense that the two adverbs balance the composition, as they are used to clarify the contrast between ארץ חיים and שאול. It is also possible to read 15:24 without למעלה whilst retaining מטה, as “below” or “beneath” is perhaps the most familiar cosmological feature of Sheol. ארץ חיים, however, is only aligned with “above” or “upwards” here in Prov. 15:24. Similarly, it is possible to make sense of the verse without מטה, if indeed למעלה is essential syntactically. That being said, to turn away (סור) from Sheol beneath (מטה), is to turn upwards (מעלה). Upwards is the logical obverse of מטה.

As discussed, other passages that convey a similar contrast include Am. 9:2, Ps. 139:8, and Job 11:8. However, in these three passages, Sheol is set as the obverse of שמים and not מעלה. The only comparable example where the term מעלה is used in contrast to Sheol is Isa. 7:11, where מעלה conceptually refers to the greatest conceivable height in opposition to Sheol (שאול) being the greatest conceivable depth. However, it is important to note at this point that unlike Isa. 7:11, Sheol in Prov. 15:24 is not in parallel opposition to מעלה but to ארץ חיים.

Its underworld connection notwithstanding, if Sheol is intended to function as the obverse of ארץ חיים in 15:24, then we are dealing with Sheol as the way of death and the consequence of wickedness. Ruin and premature death, are the outcome of the pursuit of folly. This is evidenced by the discourse in 5:9-18 following the occurrence of Sheol in 5:5. In this way, it is possible to read

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<sup>318</sup> The LXX reads: ὁδοὶ ζωῆς διανοήματα συνετοῦ, ἵνα ἐκκλίνας ἐκ τοῦ ᾗδου σωθῆ ‘*The thoughts of the prudent man are the ways of life that he may turn away from Hades and be saved*’.

Sheol in 15:24 as the grave, and thus ontologically part of this world. As in Isa. 7:11, there is no further need to impose anything otherworldly or supernatural onto *מעלה*, or to read it as a reference to immortality or a beatific afterlife. To read 15:24 through such an interpretative lens, detracts from the didactic point of the saying, and inevitably infuses this proverb with the anachronistic theology that both McKane and Whybray have argued against. Sheol in Proverbs 15:24 is, therefore, best understood as a figurative term denoting the grave, and perhaps the *path of death and the grave* as the obverse of *ארה חיים*. In other words, this proverb's concern is for one's temporal welfare, as opposed to one's eternal welfare. Finally, Prov. 12:28 provides a variation of this saying that may help to elucidate the idea:

בִּאֲרֵחַ צְדָקָה חַיִּים וּדְרֹךְ נְתִיבָה אֵל־מוֹת

*'In the path of righteousness is life, and in the way of its path there is no death'*

In relation to death and Sheol, *'the path of life/righteousness'* is its obvious counterpart.

#### 6.1.7. Prov. 23:12-14

<sup>12</sup> *Bring your heart to discipline,<sup>319</sup> and your ear to words of knowledge.*

<sup>13</sup> *Do not withhold discipline from a child,<sup>320</sup> for if you strike<sup>321</sup> him with the rod he will not die;*

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<sup>319</sup> *מוסר* may be seen as forming a link between verse 12 and verses 13-14 (Fox, 2009: 733).

<sup>320</sup> *נער* denotes a child or young boy in this context, and would seem to indicate that the instruction has shifted from Parent/teacher and pupil to parent and child.

<sup>321</sup> The hiphil imperfect *תכנו* seems to work in tandem with the second hiphil imperfect *תציל*. The smiting is a saving action.

<sup>14</sup> You,<sup>322</sup> strike him with the rod, then you will wrest<sup>323</sup> his soul/life from Sheol.<sup>324</sup>

Sheol in 23:14 requires the context of verses 12-13. While 23:12 seems to be separate, and in some ways appears to begin a new section,<sup>325</sup> it can be read along with verses 13-14. Murphy (1998: 175) separates verse 12 from verses 13-14, and sees verse 12 as standing in isolation due to the lack of any motivating verse, but notes the possible structural link with verses 13-14 in the use of מוֹסֵר. Fox (2009: 733) views the conjunction of these two instructions about discipline as indicating that the intended meaning is that “wisdom is transmitted by taking it as a child and dispensing it as an adult”. However, the shift in verse 12 to verses 13-14 from parent/teacher and pupil to parent/teacher and child, might also indicate a different use of מוֹסֵר, as verse 12 constitutes an exhortation to bring one’s heart to discipline/instruction. For this reason, it would seem that the meaning and function of מוֹסֵר in verse 12 is slightly different from that of verses 13-14 where one is told not to withhold discipline from a child, where, as Whybray (1994: 335) suggests, it is presumed that מוֹסֵר denotes physical discipline or corporal punishment.

Verse 14 functions as a second main clause, parallel with verse 13. The phrase לֹא יָמוּת ‘he will not die’, clearly indicates that once the child has learned wisdom, he will not have a bad life that leads to a bad death (cf. Prov. 13:24 and 19:18).<sup>326</sup> Sheol then parallels death, and clarifies the meaning of discipline being that which wrests, or delivers, one’s life from the adversity that results from

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<sup>322</sup> This seems to be an emphatic or jussive use of אַתָּה. Whybray (1994: 336) notes that the stress placed on “you” is perhaps intended to draw the reader’s attention, and prefers “You must beat him” in lieu of the more common conditional clause “If you beat him”.

<sup>323</sup> To translate as “wrest” renders this verb with the sense of separating or dividing from death or being aligned with Sheol.

<sup>324</sup> Here, the LXX translates Sheol in verse 14 as θάνατος instead of Hades.

<sup>325</sup> Whybray (1994: 335). Whybray cites Plöger and notes the incongruity between verse 12 and verses 13-14.

<sup>326</sup> Whybray (1994: 335); Fox (2009: 733-34) agrees with this interpretation, and also notes the similarities with Ahiqar 81-82, and that withholding discipline from one’s son is tantamount to leaving him to his own inclinations.

wickedness, foolish choices and the pursuit of folly.<sup>327</sup> In this way, the hereafter, or Sheol as an otherworldly place of the dead does not seem to be present in this passage. Here, the LXX also translates Sheol as θάνατος instead of Hades. Arguably, this harmonises verse 13 and 14 with the emphasis on death. Finally, saving or wresting one's child from Sheol through discipline indicates that one is preventing an unhappy, listless life and premature death for their child.

#### 6.1.8. Prov. 27:20

*Sheol and Abaddon<sup>328</sup> are never satisfied;<sup>329</sup> and never satisfied<sup>330</sup> are the eyes of humankind.*

Like Prov. 15:11, which draws a comparison between the underworld and the human heart in order to illustrate something of the divine nature, namely YHWH's omniscience and omnipotence, Prov. 27:20 draws a comparison between the underworld and human eyes. This is to illustrate something of human nature, namely the insatiable love of riches and wealth (cf. Eccl. 4:8).

As in 15:11, the coupling of Sheol and Abaddon, indicates that the intended function of Sheol in 27:20 is to denote the underworld. Both Whybray (1994: 39-40) and McKane (1970: 269-70) see a connection with the god Mot, with his wide, gaping throat swallowing up the dead, both here at 27:20 and especially at 1:12. The connection between insatiability and the Canaanite mythology may appear to stand behind 27:20. However, as this passage does not explicitly portray Sheol as consuming or

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<sup>327</sup> Murphy (1998: 175-76).

<sup>328</sup> Cf. 15:11 and Job 26:6. Of the six occurrences of Abaddon in the HB, Prov. 27:20 is the only occurrence with an alternative spelling. Qetiv: אַבְדֹן, Qere: אַבְדֹן. The Greek rendering of Abaddon as ἀπόλεια “annihilation; ruin” (BDAG: 127) is consistent with the other occurrences of Abaddon in the LXX.

<sup>329</sup> For the theme of insatiability or the notion of the underworld being unsatisfied, cf. Prov. 30:15-16, Isa. 5:14, and Hab. 2:5.

<sup>330</sup> The general sense of שָׂבַע in the qal is reflexive; i.e. “be sated” (BDB: 959). However, it does occur once in the niph'al at Job 31:31. However, it is possible that its use in Job 31:31 may instead be understood as a qal 1c. pl. imperfect in pausal form, which is how NRSV appears to understand its use in Job.

swallowing, as in Prov. 1:12, Is. 5:14 or Hab. 2:5, drawing a connection here would seem to be an overstatement. To say that the god Mot is used directly here to shed light on human character, as McKane does (1970: 617-18), is to unnecessarily amplify the significance of that mythology for the author. Rather, if the mythology of Mot informs 27:20 at all, it is best viewed as part of the more conventional ancient Near Eastern concept of death and the underworld, or as a remnant of the mythology, as Whybray notes (1994: 385).

Having said that, the insatiability of Sheol is secondary to perpetual human greed and love of wealth. Sheol's hunger for the dead, being characteristic of the broader concept of the ancient Near Eastern underworld, serves the purpose of clarifying the point about the nature of human cupidity, according to Whybray (1994: 385). Given the coupling of Sheol and Abaddon, Sheol is best understood in 27:20 as denoting the overall concept of the underworld and place of the dead, but its analogous use here for drawing the comparison with the human heart is purely figurative.

#### 6.1.9. Prov. 30:15-16

<sup>15</sup> *For the leech,<sup>331</sup> there are two daughters: Give, Give.<sup>332</sup> Three things are never satisfied; four things never say, "Enough":*

<sup>16</sup> *Sheol, and a barren womb, a land never satisfied with water, and a fire that never says "Enough".*

Verses 15 and 16 form a couplet, which is one of five numerical proverbs in this section of chapter 30 (30:15-33).<sup>333</sup> However, it is often preferred by scholars to divide verse 15 into two aphorisms as 15a

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<sup>331</sup> This is a Hebrew hapax legomenon. Cognates in Syriac (*‘elaqtā*, *‘alūqā*), Arabic (*‘alaq*), Ethiopic (*‘alaqt*), and Akkadian (*ilqu*) all appear to refer to leeches, or “to put on leeches” (HALOT: 831).

<sup>332</sup> The repeated imperatives would appear to denote the two daughters. The root is presumed to be **נתת** “give”, where the imperative is the only form of the verb attested in Hebrew (JM §75k: 181).

<sup>333</sup> Whybray (1994<sup>1</sup>: 150).

and 15b, due to the apparent difficulty presented by 15a regarding the leech, her two daughters and the repeated imperatives of יִהְיֶה.<sup>334</sup> This portion of the text constitutes an additional element to the three/four sequence in 15b-16 that ostensibly creates disunity with the four subsequent numerical proverbs (18-19; 21-23; 24-28; 29-31).

McKane (1970: 652) prefers total separation of 15a and 15b, as the association with 15b-16 forms a numerical saying for which there is no parallel. However, the numerical proverb at verses 24-28 only mentions four things (the ants, badgers, the locust, and the lizard) for which there is also no parallel.<sup>335</sup> Whybray (1994<sup>1</sup>: 151-152) then suggests that 15a may be a fragment of a longer proverb, but accepts its inclusion as part of the composition of this passage due to the shared theme of insatiability with 15b-16. The theme of insatiability is perhaps further intensified by the exclamatory use of the noun הֵרֵן “wealth, sufficiency”.<sup>336</sup> This noun itself is indicative of wisdom vocabulary,<sup>337</sup> and its presence in 30:15-16, where Sheol is also present, provides a thematic link with the issues of greed and unjust gain in Prov. 1:12-13, for example.

If we view these two verses as a couplet, then הֵרֵן is likely a structural device, which may suggest a four-part division of each verse, where the four constituents in verse 15 have their counterparts in verse 16. For instance, when it is read without verse 15, Sheol functions as the main subject and is subsequently described as a barren womb, a land unsatisfied with water, and a fire. However, it is noteworthy that Sheol is the only proper noun out of the four listed unless our interpretation views the leech as corresponding to Sheol. This presents a unique hermeneutical possibility in viewing the four elements of verse 15 in parallel sequence with verse 16. For example, the leech corresponds to Sheol, the two daughters correspond to the barren womb, three things never satisfied corresponds to the land

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<sup>334</sup> Waltke (2004: 26).

<sup>335</sup> Perhaps the single mention of אַרְבַּעַה without שְׁלוֹשׁ is key to the riddle; the emphasis is always finally the number four.

<sup>336</sup> BDB: 223.

<sup>337</sup> Hurvitz (1988: 46-47).

never satisfied, and the four things that never say “enough” corresponds to the fire that never says “enough”.

The LXX translation of this verse is difficult but may shed light. First, there is the mention of three beloved daughters instead of two, which Murphy (1998: 233) says ought to be disregarded. Yet this may amount to an effort on behalf of the LXX translators to make sense of the difficulty in the text and thus harmonize this phrase with the subsequent numerical proverbs. It appears then that the LXX exhibits something of the above interpretation, where one could postulate that there is a clear four-part structure to each verse:

<sup>15</sup> Τῇ βδέλλῃ (1) τρεῖς θυγατέρες ἦσαν ἀγαπήσει ἀγαπώμεναι (2), καὶ αἱ τρεῖς αὗται οὐκ ἐνεπίμπλασαν αὐτήν (3), καὶ ἡ τετάρτη οὐκ ἠρκέσθη εἰπεῖν Ἰκανόν (4).

<sup>16</sup> Ἰδης (1) καὶ ἔρωσ γυναικὸς (2) καὶ τάρταρος καὶ γῆ οὐκ ἐμπιπλαμένη ὕδατος (3) καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ πῦρ οὐ μὴ εἴπωσιν Ἀρκεῖ (4).

<sup>15</sup> *The leech has three love beloved daughters: and these three did not satisfy her; and the fourth was not content to say, “Enough”.*

<sup>16</sup> *Hades, and a woman’s love, and Tartaros, and a land not filled with water, and water and fire will not say, “Enough”.*

A leech drains blood, which of course biblically, is the life of all living creatures (e.g. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11, 14; Deut. 12:23). If it can be said that the leech in verse 30:15a corresponds to Sheol in verse 16, then Sheol in this passage might also refer, analogously, to something that likewise drains life and brings one ultimately to ruin and death. This function and use of Sheol is then quite compatible with that of other occurrences of Sheol in Proverbs.

## 6.2. ECCLESIASTES 9:10

*All that your hand finds to do, with your strength do it!  
For there is no work or reckoning or knowledge or wisdom there in Sheol where  
you are going*

As part of his teaching on the finality of death and the directive to enjoy life and do whatever one's hand finds to do with enthusiasm, Qoheleth addresses his audience seemingly without distinction between the righteous and wicked. The implication is that all who die whether good or bad ultimately go to Sheol. The statement appears as roundly pessimistic but actually seeks to form a stark contrast between life as good and death as bad for the purpose of adding emphasis to his directive to live life to the full.

The emphasis in the initial clause in 10a is on the enthusiasm and vigour with which one approaches any work or activity in life. Murphy (1992: 93) notes the significance of תַּמְצָא and cites its negative use in Eccl. 6:10-8:17, where ostensibly nothing can be found out by man. In this way, the phrase כָּל אֲשֶׁר תַּמְצָא יָדְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכַתֵּךְ עֲשֵׂה *'all that your hand finds to do, with your strength do it!'*, becomes all the more emphatic, especially in the shadow of death and Sheol. The encouragement is to live while one still can.

In the final part of 10b, we have the phrase: בְּשֵׂאוֹל אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה הֵלֵךְ שָׁמָּה *'there in Sheol where you are going'*. Sheol appears with a prefixed בּ,<sup>338</sup> where the locative הַ is affixed to שָׁמָּה. We might view the prefix and suffix as bookends, so to speak: *'in... there'*.<sup>339</sup> This bolsters the conception of Sheol as an actual place, and as the general locus of the dead. The locative may also agree with Sheol

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<sup>338</sup> Cf. Job 14:13; Ps. 6:6; Am. 9:2.

<sup>339</sup> LXX follows MT syntactically in this final line with the equivalents of ἐν βְּשֵׂאוֹל (dative) beginning the line, and the adverb ἐν ᾧδῆ, ὅπου σὺ πορεύῃ ἐκεῖ *'In Hades, where you are going there'*.

in gender.<sup>340</sup>

On the description of Sheol, where there is ‘no work or reckoning or knowledge or wisdom’, Barton (1959: 163) calls for a comparison with Isa. 14:9-11 and Ezek. 32:18-32 but this is somewhat tenuous. In Isa 14:9-11, while there is perhaps no work or wisdom in Sheol, there does seem to be some form of awareness and activity. The shades (רפאים) are roused to meet the king of Babylon, and they also appear to recognize the new arrival into Sheol where they exclaim: ‘*You also have become as weak as we; you are like us!*’. They both recognize the king of Babylon and appear to have some knowledge or awareness of each other. Similarly, in Ezek. 32:21, the mighty rulers (אלי גבורים) speak out of the midst of Sheol (בתוך שאול) concerning the Egyptians who have descended thereto. Again, the denizens of Sheol are in some way cognizant of the new arrivals. They are also apparently aware of the manner of their death in 21b: ‘*They have descended, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.*’

That being said, the occurrence of Sheol in Eccl. 9:10 is the only occurrence that seems to indicate unequivocally that all humanity whether righteous or wicked ultimately go there. Sheol, as the unavoidable destination and fate of all and place of non-being and no activity, is set in contrast to life and all the opportunities and blessings that life promises.

In 9:2, Qoheleth emphatically states that irrespective of one’s good or evil deeds, death will inevitably come to all. In 9:3, it seems that he is troubled by the injustice that all share the same fate.<sup>341</sup> In 9:4, he asserts that it is better to be alive, for even in a lowly state (כלב חי ‘a living dog’) there is yet hope for the living. In 9:5-6, the living know that they will die, but for the dead, there is no more knowledge or reward, and forever (לעולם) they have no more share in anything that is done under the sun. The force of these verses is powerfully negative, but it seems to temper Qoheleth’s remarks in

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<sup>340</sup> The other example of שם with Sheol plus the ב preposition is at Am. 9:2. The suffixed ה is not featured, however.

<sup>341</sup> Madigan and Levenson (2008: 69).

verses 7-10 in order to illustrate his existential point about the vanity of life and certainty of death, but especially the exhortation to enjoy the fruits of one's labours and to pursue life in the present.

It should be noted that Qoheleth also envisages the theme of divine judgement. Citing Eccl. 12:14, Johnston (2002: 83) points out that, while the dominant themes of the absurdity or vanity of life and the directive to enjoy life form the basis of Qoheleth's teaching, there is also the theme of trusting God and keeping His commandments. God will also judge every deed. However, these are not Qoheleth's words. They form the final point of the epilogue (12:9-14), which is appropriately added here, according to Murphy (1992: 132), as it provides "more information about the [wisdom] tradition to which [Qoheleth] belonged and which he felt free to criticize". That said, Johnston affirms that, while unclear, 12:14 "implies some form of definitive judgment". Additionally, this same theme of ultimate judgment might be seen at Eccl. 11:9:

*Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your young manhood. And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sights of your eyes, but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.*

In this way, it might be said that while Qoheleth's Sheol is in some way indiscriminate with regard to the righteous and wicked, this does not preclude ultimate judgment where God, in fact, differentiates between one's good and evil deeds. Consequently, Sheol seems to function in Eccl. 9:10 as a term used to bolster Qoheleth's message rather than to state a fact about the underworld. Given the nature of the book with its tortuous existentialism, it seems rather tenuous to cite Eccl. 9:10 in support of the notion that Sheol is the final post-mortem abode of all humanity whether righteous or wicked. Of course, it is not to be left out of the biblical assessment of Sheol, but nor is it definitive.

### 6.3. SONG OF SONGS 8:6

*Place me as a seal upon your heart - as a seal upon your arm*

*For love is as strong as death; jealousy is as ferocious as Sheol*

*Its flashes are flashes of fire – The flames of the Lord*

Given the nature of the poetry in Song 8:6, death and Sheol are secondary features in the context of the power of love. The nature and function of Sheol here can also be compared to other biblical examples of Sheol, where the theme of the insatiability of death and the underworld is part of the main emphasis, as in Prov. 30:15-16. Here, however, this theme is analogous to the passionate exclusivity of romantic love.

The details in this verse are sometimes viewed in connection with Canaanite mythology for the mention of death (מָוֶת) alongside Sheol. Others prefer to dispense with any mythological connection preferring to read 8:6 as a pure statement about the nature of love. While it is true that the text is not primarily concerned with death and the underworld, it is an oversight to ignore the mythological significance of the mention of death and Sheol. Johnston (2002: 30-31), for instance, views two possible “mythological echoes” in Song 8:6. First, he notes that the phrase ‘*love is as strong as death*’ is reminiscent of texts from Ugarit and Cyprus (p. 30 and n. 24), as well as a number of Israelite names (p. 31 and n. 27). Johnston’s second possible mythological echo relates to the phrase ‘*Its flashes are flashes of fire*’, where he notes that “Resheph, or ‘Pestilence’, was an underworld deity at Ugarit and elsewhere”. What this tells us is that the poetry in question is not culturally detached from the customs and mythology of the region, but that the significance attached to these echoes is only peripheral, a position we are compelled to take according to the primary meaning of the text. In other words, the plain reading of the text is concerned with the power of love and exclusivity in romantic love.

The initial clause in 6a, שִׁמְנִי כַחֲתָם עַל-לִבְךָ כַחֲתָם עַל-זְרוֹעֶךָ, ‘*Place me as a seal upon your heart - as a seal upon your arm*’, introduces the theme of exclusivity in love. Seals or signet rings were

common in the ancient Near East and symbolized ownership and identity.<sup>342</sup> Here, the bride desires to be identified with her lover, either sealed by the groom's seal, or as his seal. According to Pope (1977: 666), הוּתַם is a loan word from Egyptian. However, the verb הָתַם "seal, affix seal, seal up" is well attested in the HB.<sup>343</sup>

In 6b, we then have the familiar phrase כִּי־עוֹזָה כַּמּוֹת אֱהַבָהּ 'For love is as strong as death'. עֹז plus מוֹת has been viewed by some scholars as theophoric, but the preposition seems to preclude this interpretation for Song 8:6.<sup>344</sup> Pope (1977: 668) sees here a likely reference to the infernal deity Mot rather than interpreting מוֹת as a superlative in the description of the power of love. Other scholars take a more moderate approach to the comparison with the mythology of Mot. Murphy (1990: 196-97) views the Canaanite myth behind the biblical metaphor but states that, as a comparison with the power and relentlessness of love in its pursuit of one's lover, the emphasis here is upon the force and relentlessness of death in its pursuit of the living rather than the threat of death. Similarly, Longman III (2001: 210) acknowledges the ancient Near Eastern echo but does not link the phrase in 6b with Mot.

Invoking the name of the foreign deity when YHWH is ostensibly absent from the book is strange unless שְׁלֵהַבַּת־יְהוָה contains a theophoric element, יְהוָה, and we read it as 'the flames of the Lord'.<sup>345</sup> This is possible in light of Deut. 32:21-22. There in verses 19 and 21a, YHWH is jealous (קַנָּא) over his people's worship of other gods, and in verse 22 this jealousy becomes a fire burning to the depths of Sheol, which follows the preceding phrase: רֶשֶׁפִּיָּה רֶשֶׁפִּי אֵשׁ 'Its flames are flames of fire'. Furthermore, as we have seen in Prov. 30:16, a characteristic feature of Sheol is insatiability and

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<sup>342</sup> In Mesopotamia cylinder seals were worn around the neck on a string (cf. Gen. 38:18), whereas in ancient Israel, engraved seals were more commonly worn as rings (cf. Jer. 22:24; TWOT, 1: 334).

<sup>343</sup> BDB: 367.

<sup>344</sup> For a brief discussion, see Tromp (1969: 100).

<sup>345</sup> So, for example, ASV, ESV, NASB. Tromp (1969: 50n) views a comparison with the second יְהוָה in Ps. 118:5b, which he takes as a superlative, and suggests that here in Song 8:6 the same interpretation may be applied to יְהוָה. See also Segal (1962: 479).

hunger for the dead. There too, Sheol is *אֵשׁ לֹא אִמְרָהּ הוּן* ‘*a fire that never says, “Enough”*’.

Rendering *קנאה* as ‘*jealousy*’ in the parallel in 6b<sup>2</sup> (*קִשָּׁה כְּשֹׂאֵל קִנְאָה*) is problematic for some commentators. Murphy (1990: 191) prefers “ardor”, whereas Longman III (2001: 211) and Exum (2005: 251) argue in favour of ‘*jealousy*’. The LXX renders *קנאה* as ζῆλος ‘*zeal*’. However, the dark elements of death and Sheol being described as strong and ferocious, respectively, seems perfectly congruous with the emotion of jealousy. Love is not, of course, intended as something negative, but perhaps this is a subtle allusion to the seriousness of fidelity. In the same way that YHWH is jealous for his people, love seeks to hold the heart of the lover, and likewise, Sheol seeks to hold or own the dead.

The comparison of death and Sheol with love is straightforward. If a deity is present in the verse, it is YHWH, where one would look to the hapax noun *שְׁלֵה בְּתִיָּה*. While the meaning of this word is uncertain, there appears to be a positive connection with Deut. 32:19, 21-22 and Prov. 30:16. That said, viewing a reference to deities or something transcendent in Death, Sheol and Love, leans away from the point of the verse. The speaker initially says: ‘*set me as a seal upon your heart*’. Seals from a signet ring created a stamp of ownership. This is congruent with the theme of jealousy and the exclusivity of romantic love. Love, death and the underworld are ferociously powerful, and just as Sheol “owns” the dead, lovers own or hold the heart of their lover.

#### 6.4. SUMMARY

While opinions vary regarding the intended audience of the book of Proverbs, its overall concern is the present life, proper personal conduct, and, for the ancient Israelites, all that constitutes the good life.<sup>346</sup> Sheol, in this instance, seems to be adopted in Proverbs for its poetic pliability in order to serve

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<sup>346</sup> Williamson (2012: 48).

the didactic thrust of the book. That is not to say that Sheol's characteristic woes and otherworldly features are not present in these nine occurrences, but Sheol's primary function is the real-world consequence of pursuing wickedness and folly, such as debasement and premature death.

The miscellaneous occurrences of Sheol in Eccl. 9:10 and Song 8:6, however, each have a distinctive flavour. In Eccl. 9:10, Sheol is the destination of all, both righteous and wicked. However, given the tortuous nature of Qoheleth's thought, it is problematic deriving anything concrete from Eccl. 9:10 concerning Israelite beliefs about the underworld. The occurrence of Sheol in Song 8:6, on the other hand, is a poetic comparison between the insatiable greed of death and Sheol and the possessive nature and jealousy of romantic love.

## SHEOL AND RESURRECTION IN EZEKIEL

As mentioned at the outset of this thesis, it is generally considered that Sheol and resurrection are two independent notions regarding early Israelite and Jewish post-mortem, afterlife and future-life beliefs. In other words, Sheol stands for the early Israelite post-mortem expectation, and resurrection of the dead properly emerges as a belief later in the Second Temple period. However, in just a few chapters, Ezekiel mentions both Sheol and resurrection with a comparable message regarding the fate and destiny of entire nations. In Ezek. 31 and 32, Egypt, Assyria and other nations are depicted as being cast down to Sheol and residing there among the uncircumcised and those slain by the sword, and YHWH is the author of both their prosperity and demise. In Ezek. 37, we have a vivid description of a mass of dry, disarticulated bones representing the nation of Israel. They are miraculously reconstituted with sinews, flesh and skin only to have the breath of life finally animate them. Life is thus restored to those who were dead, and this being a matter of impossibility, the metaphor serves the purpose of conveying the message that Israel's God has the power to overcome the impossible and restore the entire nation of Israel to the promised land.

While it is clear that the resurrection of the dry bones is a metaphor for the restoration of the nation, the description of their life being restored bodily is so vivid and detailed, and the concept of God's ability to perform the impossible so prominent, that it seems groundless to suppose that the metaphor suddenly appears here in Ezek. 37 *ex nihilo*. It is reasonable and natural to presume that a preexisting notion, understanding or concept of resurrection from death must have informed the

metaphor for it to be understood and received as such by its original audience, as well as later audiences. Furthermore, details in chapter 37, such as the inclusion of the whole house of Israel (verse 11), as well as the second part of the chapter (verses 15-28), negate the simple interpretation of the resurrection being a stand-alone metaphor for the eventual return of the Judean exiles.

## 7.1. UNDERWORLD PHRASEOLOGY IN EZEKIEL

In Ezek. 31 and 32, Sheol occurs a total of five times. In these chapters the word seems best understood as denoting the underworld and grave in the classical sense; that is, in Ezekiel, Sheol is the underworld, the abode of the dead, and the Hebrew equivalent of other ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean underworlds.<sup>347</sup> This understanding is made especially clear from the vocabulary and underworld phraseology surrounding the prophet's mention of Sheol. The difference, however, is that even as the classic underworld, Sheol here seems to be aligned with the wicked, as opposed to being the post-mortem residence of all humanity both good and bad alike. This will be discussed further below.

A noteworthy feature of the Ezekielian underworld phraseology is that there appears to be a greater accumulation of certain phrases and expressions in Ezekiel, as opposed to other biblical texts where identical or similar phrases occur. Whether these phrases and expressions originate with Ezekiel or not is of course very difficult to determine, but here the aim will be to examine those phrases that are most clearly synonymous with the underworld, as the consistency and uniformity of their use in these chapters may serve to shed light on what Ezekiel means by *Sheol*.

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<sup>347</sup> This interpretation of Sheol in Ezekiel is not contested. Block (1998: 225), citing Lang (1986: 145-48) views Sheol here as the bottom tier of a three-tiered universe: 1. Heaven (שמים): the realm of the deity, 2. Earth (ארץ היים): the realm of the living, 3. Sheol (ארץ תהרת): the realm of the dead. See also Lang's discussion of a three-tiered universe.

(i) בארץ תחתית/תחתיות *'the land below'*. This phrase is unique to Ezekiel and occurs six times: 26:20, 31:14, 16, 18, 32:18, 24.<sup>348</sup> In the context of Sheol, בארץ תחתית appears to be a descriptive phrase that is to be identified with Sheol, which also situates it somewhere below the surface of the earth. Whereas, in 31:14, 16, and 18 we have the adjective, תחתית, in 26:20, 32:18, and 24 we have the plural noun, תחתיות. The Ezekielian phrase is an inverted version of what Allen (1990: 73) calls “the usual form”: תחתיות ארץ *'depths of the earth'*. However, this form is found only three times, in Ps. 63:10, 139:15, and Isa. 44:23.

Johnston (2002: 109) asserts that, while *'the land below'* is certainly an appellation for the underworld, ארץ need not be viewed as an underworld term in isolation, as some scholars have suggested.<sup>349</sup> He highlights the fact that תחתית refers to the underworld elsewhere without further qualification (cf. Pss. 63:10, 88:7, 139:15; Lam. 3:55), whereas ארץ requires additional qualification to be understood as such. In this way, בארץ תחתית alludes to the underworld and is likely synonymous with Sheol. As a descriptive phrase, and a form that is syntactically peculiar to Ezekiel, בארץ תחתית in chapters 31 and 32 highlights Sheol's function as the underworld of the dead in the classical sense.

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<sup>348</sup> LXX: 26:20 – εἰς βάθη τῆς γῆς *'in the depths of the earth'*; 31:14, 18, 32:24 – εἰς γῆς βάθος (singular) *'in the depth of earth'*; 31:16 – παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν ἐν γῆ *'they consoled him on the earth'*; 32:18 – βάθος τῆς γῆς *'depth of the earth'*. NRSV and ESV translate בארץ תחתית as *'the world below'* in the above Ezekiel passages, and add *'the world below'* to Job 40:13, presumably for בטמון *'in hiding/hiddenness'*. Though Sheol is not mentioned in Job 40:13, many modern English translations see the underworld here in parallel with בעפר, which may further support my view that עפר is to be counted as a Sheol synonym (see analysis at Dan. 12:2).

<sup>349</sup> Especially Dahood (1966: 106) and Tromp (1969: 23-46).

(ii) יורדי בור *'those who descend into the pit'*.<sup>350</sup> This familiar phrase occurs fifteen times in the HB, and a total of nine times in Ezekiel: 26:20 (2x), 31:14, 16, 32:18, 24-25, 29-30.<sup>351</sup> In various passages, בור refers to a dungeon or pit for prisoners. For example, in Isa. 24:22 we read: על-בור ואספו אספה אסיר *'and they will be gathered together as a prisoner in a pit'*; in Jer. 37:16 we read: כי בא ירמיהו אל-בית הבור ואל-התניות *'When Jeremiah had come to the house of the dungeon and to the cells'*; and furthermore, in Lam. 3:53 and 55, בור refers to a pit where the sense is likely intended to be understood as a prison or place of confinement, and also perhaps a grave, when stones are heaped upon the prisoner and water closes in over him.

The plural participle plus noun in יורדי בור seems to negatively single out a collective group rather than referring more generally to all humanity. In Ps. 28:1, for example, the psalmist expresses the desire not to be like those who descend to the pit, being the wicked and workers of iniquity (verse 3). Additionally, in Ps. 30:1-4, the psalmist extols the Lord for having brought up his life from Sheol and from among those who descend thereto, being the psalmist's foes (verse 2).

In comparison with יורדי בור, Heintz (TDOT, 1: 466) views a similar function for באר in Pss. 55:24 and 69:16. This comparison with יורדי בור is worth noting, as these examples of באר certainly

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<sup>350</sup> Using Zech. 11:2 as an example, Greenberg (1997: 538) takes the participle of ירד as a stative verb in the same manner as נפל and translates יורדי בור as *"those descended into the pit"*. If this is accurate, then יורדי בור need not be associated only with the wicked, but with the dead in general. However, in Zech. 11:2, both נפל and ירד are qal masculine singular perfects, so the comparison seems tenuous.

<sup>351</sup> Elsewhere – Pss. 28:1, 30:3, 88:4, 143:7; Prov. 1:12; Isa. 38:18. In Isa. 14:19, a variation on יורדי בור occurs, where the author has retained the construct plural participle plus בור but has extended the phrase by adding *'to the stones of'*: יורדי אל-אבני-בור. LXX (NETS): 26:20a – και καταβιβάσω σε πρὸς τοὺς καταβαίνοντας εἰς βόθρον *'And I will force you down to those who descend into a hole'*, and 20b – μετὰ καταβαινόντων εἰς βόθρον *'with those who descend into a hole'*; 31:14 – ἀνθρώπων πρὸς καταβαίνοντας εἰς βόθρον *'To people who descend into a hole'*; 31:16 – μετὰ τῶν καταβαινόντων εἰς λάκκον *'with those who descend into a hole'* (note the different vocabulary: λάκκον – NETS remains consistent in its translation as *'hole'*); 32:18 – πρὸς τοὺς καταβαίνοντας εἰς βόθρον *'to those who descend into a hole'*; 32:24-25 – μετὰ τῶν καταβαινόντων εἰς βόθρον *'with those who descend into a hole'*, and 25 (untranslated in the LXX) – ἐν μέσῳ τραυματιῶν *'in the midst of the wounded'*; 32:29-30 – μετὰ καταβαινόντων εἰς βόθρον *'with those who descend into a hole'*, and 30 – μετὰ τῶν καταβαινόντων εἰς βόθρον *'with those who descend into a hole'*.

appear to have the underworld in mind. First, the occurrence in Ps. 69:15 is significant, as Sheol is absent from this psalm yet, in a similar manner to other notable Sheol passages, such as Numbers 16:30-33, באר is characterized as having a mouth. Second, in Ps. 55:24 באר and שחת are conflated to form an unusual and difficult construct: לַבַּאֲר שְׁחַת.<sup>352</sup> This construct is perhaps intended to convey the lowest part of the underworld, as the ‘*pit of the grave*’ or ‘*well of the pit*’ to where the treacherous ‘*men of blood*’ will be thrown down and destroyed.

(iii) חללי הרב ‘*those slain by the sword*’.<sup>353</sup> The exact phrase חללי הרב occurs once in Isa. 22:2, Jer. 14:18, and lam. 4:9, with one variation in Zeph. 2:12: חללי הרבי ‘*those slain by my sword*’. The phrase occurs a total of eleven times in Ezek. 31:17, 18, 32:20, 21, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 35:8 with two further variations 32:24 and 26. In 32:24, the qal masculine plural participle of נפל is inserted into the normal form of the phrase: חללים הנפלים בהרב ‘*all of them slain, those falling by the sword*’. In 32:26, we find the pual participle of חלל in the phrase חרב מְחַלְלֵי ‘*those pierced by the sword*’.<sup>354</sup> Allen (1990: 126) suggests that “those slain by the sword” alongside the “uncircumcised” may indicate that the afterlife experience of these unfortunates is different and perhaps grimmer than that of ordinary people. However, a contrast between the underworld experience of ordinary people and those mentioned in this passage as the slain or uncircumcised is not explicit. Alternatively, the repetition of חללי הרב in the context of Sheol may also signal the possibility that this phrase is employed by Ezekiel in a similar way to בור יורדי and ערלים. These phrases and terminology serve to describe the

<sup>352</sup> RSV/NRSV: “the lowest pit”; KJV/NKJV, ESV: “pit of destruction”; NIV: “pit of decay” – presumably following the LXX, where שחת takes on the sense of its corresponding verb (Tate, 1990: 54): φρέαρ διαφθορᾶς ‘*well of corruption*’.

<sup>353</sup> LXX: αὐτῶν ἐκοιμήθησαν ἀπερίτμητοι μετὰ τραυματιῶν μαχαίρας ‘*They sleep uncircumcised with those wounded by the short sword*’.

<sup>354</sup> This is the only pual example of חלל in the HB. Block (1992: 115n) draws a further comparison with חלל רשע, translating the phrase as “mortal sinner” in 21:30, 34 (25, 29). Cf. also Isa. 66:16 – ורבו חללי יה’ כי באש יה’ נשפט ובחרבו את כל בשר.

denizens of the underworld, and perhaps also segregation of different groups, as part of Ezekiel's portrayal of Sheol.

(iv) ערלים 'uncircumcised'. This collective plural noun occurs ten times in chapters 31 and 32: 31:18, 32:19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28-30, 32. In the Ezekielian context, ערלים appears to have a special significance, and, with the exception of 32:19, each occurrence of ערלים is either preceded or followed by 'those slain by the sword', or a variation of that phrase.

Citing Lods (1943: 279-83), Allen (1990: 126) reports on the possibility that the Israelites may have had different burial rites for uncircumcised infants, which might also have given rise to the belief in a different experience in the underworld. He further cites Eissfeldt (1950: 73-81) for his interpretation of חללי חרב as murder victims, and in this way, the same connection might be made for victims of a violent death being treated differently in burial. On this alleged distinction between circumcised and uncircumcised in burial, Greenberg (1997: 662) notes that while there is, in fact, no evidence for such a custom, segregation in the underworld may be implicit in Ezekiel's consignment of Pharaoh with the uncircumcised and those slain by the sword. In this context, however, it is clear that ערלים functions primarily as an insult to Pharaoh, and seems to denote a specific group who are not merely non-Israelites. Greenberg (1997: 661) notes that the Egyptians also practised circumcision, and therefore to be buried with the uncircumcised would have been a disgrace for Pharaoh.

In a comparable oracle against the prince of Tyre, the first occurrence of ערלים in Ezekiel is at 28:10. As with the Egyptians, Herodotus reports that the Phoenicians followed them in practising circumcision (2.104), and thus the expression in 28:10, מותי ערלים תמות, 'the deaths of the uncircumcised you shall die', would have been equally insulting to a Tyrian (Greenberg, 1997: 576). Furthermore, the context of chapter 28 also seems to allude to the underworld or grave with comparable language to that of chapters 31 and 32. In verse 8, for instance, the prince is told that he will be thrown

down (יורדוך) into the pit (שחתה) and that he will ‘*die the death of the uncircumcised in the heart of the seas*’ (ומתה ממותי חלל בלב ימים).<sup>355</sup>

One salient point of these oracles against Tyre and Egypt is that their monarchs are not divine, and their hubris and self-exaltation will be penalised; in death, these rulers will retain nothing of the earthly status that they held in life. The declaration that Pharaoh will ultimately reside in death among the uncircumcised and those slain by the sword is a direct affront to his pomposity, but also an expression of the desired humiliation of Pharaoh (cf. 31:16b – ‘*and they were comforted in the land below*’)

(v) בארץ חיים ‘*in the land of the living*’. As with the above phrases, the greater concentration of the use of this phrase is in Ezekiel. בארץ חיים occurs fifteen times in the HB, with seven of those occurrences in Ezekiel alone: 26:20, 32:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 32.<sup>356</sup> בארץ חיים gives us the obverse of the above panoply of underworld phraseology, but especially בארץ תחתית, and, by way of contrast, further clarifies the intended meaning of the other underworld phrases.

The concentrated and consistent use of the above underworld phraseology in chapters 31 and 32 bespeaks a similarly consistent function of Sheol. Each of the above phrases is in some way illustrative in purpose, and they serve to clarify the nature of the abode of the dead. What we learn is that Sheol is the ‘*the land below*’, the place to which people descend in specific groups, as ‘*the uncircumcised*’, ‘*those slain by the sword*’, and ‘*those who descend into the pit*’. The sevenfold mention of the ‘*land of the living*’, by way of contrast, likewise clarifies what the other repeated phrases are referring to; that is, the subterranean world of the dead.

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<sup>355</sup> For the underworld connection with the sea, cf. Jon. 2:2-6.

<sup>356</sup> Isa. 38:11, 53:8; Jer. 11:19; Pss. 27:13, 52:5, 116:9, 142:5; Job 28:13.

## 7.2. SHEOL IN EZEKIEL

### 7.2.1. Ezek. 31:14b-18

Chapter 31 of Ezekiel contains the fifth oracle against Egypt, the first beginning in chapter 29. The theme of the oracle in chapter 31 is the “downfall of the proud” (Greenberg, 2010: 644-45), but with an emphasis on entire nations. Chapter 31 consists of an allegory depicting the king of Assyria as a grand cedar of Lebanon, and the envy of all other trees (nations), including the trees of Eden (verses 8-9).<sup>357</sup> Assyria is the one to whom birds and creatures of the field are drawn (verses 3-7). In the judgment that follows, the cosmic tree of Assyria is felled and cast down to Sheol (verses 15-18). There he joins other mortals long dead, and they are comforted by his demise.<sup>358</sup>

Block (1998: 178) sees the chapter as composite, and divides it structurally into three distinct sections: i) verses 2b-9 consist of a poetic allegory depicting Assyria as a cosmic cedar, ii) verses 10-14 announce judgment on the cosmic cedar, and iii) in verses 15-18 the great tree is cast down to Sheol. However, while Block’s delineation of this structure is accurate, the allegory clearly spans the entire chapter. The allegory is also important for interpretive purposes, as it underscores God’s authority over nations and the theme of humiliation in Sheol for those who would seek to usurp his authority, in this case, Assyria and Egypt.

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<sup>357</sup> The BHS and others emend **אֲשׁוּר** to **הַאֲשׁוּר**. However, Assyria and Egypt are often spoken of in the same context (cf. for example: 2 Kgs. 23:29; Isa. 7:18, 11:16, 19:23-25, 27:13; Jer. 2:18; Lam. 5:6; Hos. 9:3, 11:5, 11; Mic. 7:12; Zech. 10:10-11), and given that Israel and Judah were situated between both superpowers, to use Assyria in all its worldly magnificence as an example to Pharaoh of mortality and impermanence is not surprising or out of place. In this light, there is no clear reason why emending **אֲשׁוּר** to **הַאֲשׁוּר** would be necessary.

<sup>358</sup> Greenberg compares a text from the Wadi-Brisa inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II (ANET<sup>3</sup>, 307), which bears some resemblance to Ezekiel’s cedar. The text highlights the well-known qualities and value of the cedars of Lebanon, and thus lends some substance to the allegory here, but adds little to the meaning of the overall message of the passage.

(14b) *כי כלם נתנו למות* ‘for all of them are given over/delivered to death’ – cf. 32:20, also in reference to Egypt: *חרב נתנה* ‘a sword she is given over to’. Immediately following this phrase, the parallel is given as *בארץ תחתית* ‘the land below’. The underworld phraseology is consistent throughout these verses. Although earlier in 26:20 we have an appearance of some of the above underworld phraseology (i and ii), 31:14b functions as a segue into the judgment that follows, and thus begins our discussion of Sheol.

It cannot be mistaken that here we are dealing with the fate of death that is faced by all humanity: *כי כלם נתנו למות* ‘all of them are given over to death’. The proud will join the *בני אדם* ‘children of humanity’ in the underworld, along with *יורדי בור* ‘those who descend into the pit’. On *בני אדם*, Zimmerli (1983: 152) notes that this is the only example of the plural form to be found in Ezekiel, a fact which bolsters the universal nature of death and Sheol in the passage. Block (1998: 192) also states that 14b functions rhetorically as a corrective statement, reminding all that they are equally mortal. Later in verse 16b, the trees of Eden (presumably representing God’s people) are comforted by Assyria’s demise and descent into Sheol (cf. Isa. 14:9-10).

(15) *ביום רדתו שאולה האבלתי* ‘On the day he descended to Sheol I caused mourning’. All three occurrences of Sheol in Ezekiel 31 are spelt in full and bear the directive *ה* – *שאולה*. In each case, this is preceded by *יָרַד*.<sup>359</sup>

Here, Zimmerli (1983: 152) briefly discusses the etymology of Sheol. Like other surveys mentioned in chapter 1 (1.1.1.), he recounts the main proposals, and discusses Sheol’s appearance as a proper name intimating that there is some trace of an older belief about Sheol: “The lack of the article

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<sup>359</sup> In the LXX, each occurrence of Sheol in chapter 31 is translated as Hades, and is spoken of figuratively as lamenting the fall of Assyria: *Ἐν ἡ ἡμέρᾳ κατέβη εἰς ἄδου, ἐπένησεν αὐτὸν ἡ ἄβυσσος* ‘On the day he went down to Hades, the abyss lamented him’.

in all the occurrences in the OT would certainly suggest that the word still had something of the ring of a proper name about it”. He also reiterates that we have not been able to fully explain its etymology.

There is some translational difficulty with verse 15. The versions and other modern translations understand **האבלתי** as deriving from **אבל** ‘to mourn’.<sup>360</sup> Block (1998, 194), admits that this makes sense in light of the cedar’s fate, but finds the phrase awkward in light of the following material. He recognizes here a denominative verb referring to closing, as in closing a gate, which he sees as cognate to Aram. *’ibbul* and Akk. *abullu*, ‘gate’. In this way, **האבלתי** may then be rendered as “to shut (like a door)”.<sup>361</sup> Accordingly, Block translates this as “*I shut off [the water supply]*”. However, **אבל** is not isolated in the context as the only possible connection to mourning. The verb **קדר** (here in the hiphil) also suggests the darkness and gloom of mourning (cf. Jer. 8:21, 14:2; Job 5:11, 30:28; Ps. 35:14, 38:7, 42:10, 43:2). Additionally, **עלפה** has traditionally been read as the other trees fainting over the cedar’s fall, perhaps from grief, but also fainting in dismay (see verse 16 below).<sup>362</sup> In this way, to construe **אבל** as a reference to mourning is entirely consistent with the context of the passage. We might then construe the language as illustrative, depicting a grand funeral scene for the cosmic cedar, where **שאוּלָה רדתו** may be read as a euphemism for the death and demise of Assyria, and **האבלתי** as *mourning*, thus complements the actual burial (**כסה**).<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> NRSV appears to render **האבלתי** as a covering verb along with **כסה** (“I closed the deep over it and covered it”), whereas all other standard translations render it in some way as a reference to mourning or lamentation.

<sup>361</sup> This rendering comes from G. R. Driver and J. C. Miles (1955: 2:181 n. 1). As Block notes, Driver and Miles also delete **כסתי** as a gloss on **האבלתי**. If indeed **האבלתי** is to be read as a shutting/closing verb, a comparison with the bars or gates of Sheol may be helpful (cf. Isa. 38:10; Jon. 2:6; Job 17:16). The consensus, however, seems to be that **האבלתי** is read as relating to mourning. So for example, Allen (1990: 122); Cooke (1936: 342-43); Greenberg (1997: 636, 641); Zimmerli (1983: 144-45).

<sup>362</sup> LXX: ἐξελύθησαν ‘they have fainted/weakened’ (cf. 2 Sam. 16:2, 17:29 [for **עִיף**]; Lam. 2:19 [for **עִטֵּף**]). See BDAG: 306.

<sup>363</sup> For the use of **כסה** in covering or burying the dead, cf. Num. 16:33; Isa. 26:21; Ezek. 24:7; Job 21:26; Ps. 106:17.

(16) מקול מפלתו הרעשתי גוים (16) *‘From the thunderous noise of his fall, I caused the nations to tremble’*.<sup>364</sup> Not only are the nations grieved, but they are also dismayed at the fall of Assyria. In this instance, הרעשתי embellishes the description of the impact on the other nations and perhaps serves as an interpretation of עלפה from the previous verse.<sup>365</sup>

As mentioned, part of the judgment on, and insult to Pharaoh is being buried with those considered contemptible in the eyes of both the Israelites and Egyptians. In 16b, the addition of אתה to בורדי בור, understood in this instance as the preposition *‘with’*, seems to distinguish further *‘those who descend...’* as a category of dishonoured or wicked people, alongside the *‘uncircumcised’* and *‘those slain by the sword’*, and thereby bolsters the insult. The fact that the trees of Eden are comforted in Sheol, underscores the humiliation of Assyria (cf. Isa. 14:9-10).

(17) Following the mention of the trees of Eden and them being comforted, verse 17 states unambiguously that they too have descended into Sheol, to join *with* Assyria (גם הם אתה), and *‘to those slain by the sword’* (אל).

According to Cooke (1936: 343), the MT’s addition of אתה *‘with him’* disturbs the measure. This observation seems redundant, however, as אתה serves to elucidate the underworld circumstances of the trees of Eden.

The mention of Assyria’s arm, or their ally, should not be overlooked. Zimmerli (1983: 145n) summarizes some of the solutions proposed for the textual issues arising from וזרעו but concludes that the problematic detail remains uncertain. Block (1998: 196) notes the implication that וזרעו is perhaps a reference to Assyria’s ally, and possibly Egypt, for which he provides the comparison of Ezek. 30:20-26. The LXX translates this as καὶ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτοῦ *‘and his offspring’*. With that being said, the

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<sup>364</sup> With the nations as the object of the verb, הרעשתי is consistent with האבלתי in the previous verse, and lends further support for the translational consensus as *‘I caused mourning’*.

<sup>365</sup> Greenberg (1997: 643).

following material, יִשְׁבוּ בְצֵלוֹ בְּתוֹךְ גּוֹיִם ‘*they who dwelt in his shade among the nations*’,<sup>366</sup> seems to indicate clearly that וְזֶרְעוֹ is a metaphor for an unidentified ally of Assyria. The message, however, remains the same; that is, those allied with Assyria, and consequently with Egypt also, will share in their dishonourable fate.

(18) In this concluding verse to the chapter, the opening rhetorical question posed to Pharaoh in verse 2b is restated in verse 18a. As Block (1998: 196) states, Ezekiel brings the reader back to the reality of Pharaoh and his hubris, and the purpose of the allegory, which is to say that, even as Assyria has been brought down, the pride of Egypt will likewise be brutally humbled and brought down to Sheol.

All the above underworld phraseology is further reiterated in neat succession: ‘*And you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the land below. Among the uncircumcised, you shall lie, with those slain by the sword*’. Though Sheol is not named in this verse, the effect of this sequence, especially as a slight to Pharaoh, indicates that the underworld here is aligned with all things sinister and negative (Barr, 1992: 29). It is perhaps also a deliberate negation of the expected beatific afterlife for Pharaoh that was so prominent in Egyptian religion and mythology.

### 7.2.2. Ezek. 32:18-32

Following the allegory in chapter 31 and condemnation of Pharaoh, chapter 32 consists of a detailed and brutal lament over Egypt followed by a descriptive list of nations who have fallen to the sword and now lie dead in the underworld.

The lament begins in verse 2b and concludes in verse 16. It is in verse 11 where we learn that God intends to use Babylon (חֲרֹב מִלְּךְ בָּבֶל) as his instrument of punishment on Egypt. Babylon is

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<sup>366</sup> LXX: οἱ κατοικοῦντες ὑπὸ τὴν σκέπην αὐτοῦ, ἐν μέσῳ τῆς ζωῆς αὐτῶν ἀπόλοντο ‘*those who lived under his shelter, perished in the middle of their life*’.

described as the most terrible of nations that will bring to ruin the pride of Egypt. Here, Sheol is mentioned only twice (verses 21 and 27), but Ezekiel makes great use of the above panoply of underworld phrases, which further serves to underscore the sinister nature of Sheol. However, the emphasis on other nations in chapter 32 may also indicate that talk of Sheol and the underworld in these passages is largely figurative; that is, the underworld, and the nations that are named as its denizens, is not the reality conveyed here, but rather the universal authority of Israel's God over the rise and fall of other nations in the real world.

(18) After the lament in 2b to 16, in 18a Ezekiel is commanded to הורדהו 'send them down' (hiphil imperative of ירד) אל ארץ תחתיות את יורדי בור (ירד) 'to the earth's depths,<sup>367</sup> with those who descend into the pit'. There are twenty-nine occurrences of ירד in Ezekiel, and twenty-six of these are found in the context of the oracles against Tyre and Egypt and mention of the underworld. According to Zimmerli (1983: 172), this makes ירד something of a motif in these passages. Here, the prophet is told by God to 'send them down'. Cody (1984: 154) interprets the hiphil imperative, הורדהו, as an indication that 'Ezekiel's efficacious word' will be the actual instrument of Egypt's demise in lieu of the sword of Babylon. Zimmerli (1983: 172), however, sees הורדהו as anticipating the qal imperative, רדה, spoken by God in verse 19. That Ezekiel and God are to speak these words against Egypt, simply indicates that הורדהו is perhaps another way of saying 'prophecy against them regarding their imminent fall'.

(19) Verse 19 seems to be a reiteration of 31:18. It retains a similar structure of rhetorical question followed by judgment. Whereas in 31:18 ירד and שכב are expressed in the imperfect, here they are both qal and hophal imperatives, respectively: רדה והשכבה את ערלים 'Go down, and be

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<sup>367</sup> LXX: εἰς τὸ βάθος τῆς γῆς 'into the depth of the earth'. βάθος is singular, whereas the Hebrew has switched to include the plural noun: תחתיות.

*laid with the uncircumcised!*'. Pharaoh is asked a rhetorical question: מִזִּמּוֹי נַעֲמֹת 'whom do you surpass in beauty/loveliness?'. It is reminiscent of the rhetorical questions found in chapter 31 (verses 2b and 18). The emphasis here, however, is on Pharaoh's physical beauty (BDB: 653) rather than his glory and greatness, as in the previous chapter (2b: בַּגְדֶּלֶךָ, and 18: כְּבוֹד וּבְגֵדָל). Economic, agricultural and cultural prosperity is perhaps part of what is in view here. In this way, the emphasis on the rise and fall of the nations in question and the supreme and singular authority of Israel's God are the major themes of these chapters.

(20) חָרַב נִתְּנָה 'She has been handed over to the sword' – In 31:14b, all are given over to death (כִּי כָלָם נִתְּנוּ לַמּוֹת). Here, more specifically, Pharaoh has been delivered over to the sword of Babylon (verse 19 above). In this way, death and descent into Sheol at the hands of Babylon, another nation, in one sense gives Sheol some kind of punitive function, but, like exile equating to the "death" of Israel/Judah, to speak of Egypt, and the other nations residing in the underworld, is perhaps a figurative way of conveying the supremacy of God over all nations and their rise or fall on the world stage.

(21) In verse 21, we have the first mention of Sheol in the chapter. Interestingly, the LXX does not mention Hades in this verse, but opens with καὶ ἐροῦσίν σοι οἱ γίγαντες Ἐν βάθει βόθρου 'And the giants in the depth of the hole'.

Though their exact identity is unknown, אֱלֵי גְבוּרִים 'The mighty chiefs' speak out of the midst of Sheol concerning Pharaoh and his hordes, imagery that is highly reminiscent of Isa. 14:9-10.<sup>368</sup> As in Isa. 14:9, where the leaders of the earth are stirred up to greet the king of Babylon, these rulers, though dead, likewise exhibit some awareness of Pharaoh's arrival and exclaim יִרְדּוּ שָׁכְבוּ 'They have descended, they lie down'.

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<sup>368</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 174) considers the introduction of the 'mighty chiefs' and their "spokesmen" as a later addition to the text. See also Cooke's discussion of the possible interpolations here (1936: 351).

In anticipation of *ירכתי בור* ‘*the farthest reaches of the pit*’, reserved for Pharaoh in verse 23, Block (1998: 218-19) sees here an indication that the mighty chiefs occupy “more honourable quarters” in the underworld. The final part of the verse is a reiteration of the two underworld expressions that have consistently appeared together: *חללי הרב* and *ערלים*.

Here, Sheol is clearly the underworld of the dead, but with the mention of *ערלים* and *חללי הרב*, it would seem that Sheol functions as the underworld for the disgraced and those who have died violently, or in battle. The *אלֵי גבורים* (perhaps a reference to the Rephaim) appear to witness Egypt’s arrival, as they are clearly already in Sheol, but they are given a separate place of rest there, which becomes clear in verse 27.

(22) Assyria is first on the list of nations that have fallen by the sword and are described as lying dead in Sheol. *סביבותיו קברתיו* ‘*his graves all around him*’<sup>369</sup> – This detail seems to offset the figurative interpretation mentioned above. However, this too might be a figurative way of saying that not only has the king fallen, but the nation (*קהלה* ‘*all his assembly*’), once powerful and prosperous in the world, has fallen with him so that Assyria, Elam or whoever is not merely leaderless, but they are no longer the dominant power.

(23) ‘*ירכה*’, in the phrase *ירכתי בור* ‘*the farthest reaches of the pit*’, occurs 28 times in the HB. Here again, a comparison with Isa. 14 can be made, where, in Isa. 14:15, the king of Babylon is told ‘*nevertheless, you are brought down to Sheol, to the farthest reaches of the pit*’.

(24) The nation of Elam is mentioned after Assyria and interestingly appears to be directly labelled as ‘*uncircumcised*’: *אשר ירדו ערלים*. A new element regarding Elam appears here in the MT: ‘*they carry their shame*’. The LXX renders this as receiving torments: *καὶ ἐλάβοσαν τὴν βάσανον*

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<sup>369</sup> LXX: *καὶ ἐγενήθη ἡ συναγωγὴ αὐτοῦ περικύκλω τοῦ μνήματος αὐτοῦ* ‘*and his gathering came to be all around his tomb*’ (NETS).

αὐτῶν μετὰ τῶν καταβαινόντων εἰς βόθρον ‘and they received torment with those who descend into a pit’.<sup>370</sup>

(25-26) The same language used to describe the fate of Assyria is used here of Elam, and Meshech and Tubal also: they are ‘uncircumcised’, ‘slain by the sword’, they spread ‘terror in the land of the living’, and their ‘graves are all around it’ (סביבותיו קברתהּ in verse 25, and סביבותיו קברותיהּ in verse 26).

(27) The negation אֵלֹא is unexpected,<sup>371</sup> and is problematic in light of verse 21, where, out of the midst of Sheol the גבורים אֵלֹא acknowledge Egypt’s underworld descent. If the MT reading is to be accepted, then verse 27 appears to give the mighty chiefs a separate underworld status. To omit the negative particle, however, harmonises these two verses where they then meet the same fate as the other groups.<sup>372</sup> The LXX of verse 21 has them saying to Egypt in the imperative: ‘descend, and lie with the uncircumcised, in the midst of those wounded by the dagger’ (κατάβηθι καὶ κοιμήθητι μετὰ ἀπεριτμητῶν ἐν μέσῳ τραυματιῶν μαχαίρας). In the MT, the mighty chiefs do not claim to be among the other groups of ערלים and הללֵי הרב themselves but appear to witness the arrival of Pharaoh and his hordes.

(28-30) The same judgment on the other nations listed is allotted to Egypt also. Additional nations are then mentioned in verses 29-30, namely Edom, the princes of the north (נסיכי צפון), and the Sidonians. The LXX omits Edom in verse 29, and the Sidonians in verse 30, and instead replaces Edom with ἐκεῖ ἐδόθησαν οἱ ἄρχοντες Ἀσσοῦρ ‘the rulers of Assyria were given there’, and adds πάντες στρατηγοὶ Ἀσσοῦρ ‘all the commanders of Assyria’ to נסיכי צפון.

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<sup>370</sup> This concept of post-mortem torments is not, of course, present in the HB, but could prove instructive in a study on the development of post-mortem punishments, such as Gehenna and Hell.

<sup>371</sup> The LXX and Syriac omit אֵלֹא.

<sup>372</sup> Johnston (2002: 76f). Johnston also notes the difficulty of the negative particle in verse 27 but also the fact that their description is similar which implies the same fate. Johnston (n. 37) also provides a list of scholars who accept the MT and envisage the mighty chiefs lying separately in Sheol.

(31-32) In an odd comparison with the comfort of the trees of Eden in 31:16, Pharaoh will be consoled or comforted when he sees these other nations in Sheol. Nevertheless, Pharaoh will share the same fate as Assyria and the other nations who spread their terror in the world, and *'he will be laid to rest with the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword'*.

### 7.2.3. Summary

In one way, Ezekiel's Sheol in chapters 31 and 32 functions as the underworld of the dead in the classical sense as the Hebrew equivalent of other ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean underworlds. However, Sheol here deviates from the classical underworld, as there is a clear emphasis on the criminals, those disgraced, and those who died violently and prematurely in battle in chapter 31, and in chapter 32, Sheol is aligned with wicked and violent nations who spread their terror in the world. Furthermore, individuals descending into Sheol are the cosmic cedar of Lebanon (Assyria) and Pharaoh, but they represent their nations, which is the actual focus of the descent and final resting place of its denizens and prospective denizens.

When we are confronted with Sheol as the underworld of the dead, the specific underworld phrases and expressions that describe Sheol as such, are the six-fold repetition of **בארץ תחתית/תחתיות** *'the land below'*, as well as the concentrated and varied use of the verb **יָרַד** throughout these chapters.

From the phrases **עַרְלִים**, **חַרְב**, **חַלְלֵי חַרְב** and **יֹרְדֵי בֹר**, we learn that Sheol is here an undesirable place, and one most closely aligned with the wicked, outcasts and victims of war. To lie with the uncircumcised would have been disgraceful, and condemning Pharaoh to such a fate is as much an insult to an Egyptian as it would be to an Israelite.

Importantly, Sheol, like resurrection in chapter 37, is conceived of as a place not for individuals, but for entire nations. From the mention of the various nations in the second half of chapter 32, especially, and with the repetition of language describing their demise and disgrace in the underworld,

it seems that the focus on entire nations is a figurative way of referring, not to their actual descent into Sheol, but to their collapse and disappearance from the world stage as the dominant superpowers.

It is also important to note that, while on one level we are assuming a basic understanding of Ezekiel's Sheol as a classic representation of the underworld, these five occurrences appear in a dirge and lament with a negative emphasis on the uncircumcised, enemy nations and those slain in battle. The use of the word Sheol here is still poetical. Block (1992: 113-14), in his effort to understand Ezekiel's view of death and the afterlife, still asks the question of whether the underworld images and language in these passages reflect Ezekiel's understanding of reality. Perhaps we can only assume that Sheol had some kind of a real place in Ezekiel's worldview, but here it seems clear that the prophet's use of the term functions poetically.

### **7.3. RESURRECTION IN EZEKIEL**

The importance of Ezek. 37 for understanding resurrection, as well as Sheol, lies in its emphasis on the supremacy of Israel's god, and the theme of national restoration. As we have seen, God's absolute authority and power over life and death, and the concern for the nation and its future hope are two prominent themes in connection with biblical resurrection. Furthermore, Ezekiel's manner of repeating phrases throughout the book, with the noticeable accumulation of these phrases bespeaks a single author and may shed further light on the matters of Sheol and resurrection.

Regarding Sheol in chapters 31 and 32, God, with complete sovereignty and absolute power, is the author of the prosperity of other nations, as well as their demise in light of their hubris. In this way, Sheol, with its attendant underworld phraseology, functions as a metaphor in these chapters to describe the rise and fall of nations. Egypt, for instance, did not cease to exist as a nation, but certainly lost its position and status as the dominating power on the ancient world stage. This does not mean, of course, that Sheol and the place of the dead, was not considered by the prophet to be a reality in some form,

but only that the imagery and phraseology were freely and poetically used to convey these major themes. The reality of Sheol and the underworld of the dead, however, is secondary at best.

In chapter 37, resurrection is likewise a metaphor for the spiritual revivification and physical restoration of the nation to the land of Israel, and the vision is illustrated with extraordinary detail. That being said, for the metaphor to have had a receptive sixth century B.C.E. audience, the concept must have been in some way familiar. As we saw with Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6, God's ultimate authority is expressed by way of his power to give new life to the dead, and this fundamental theological assertion is essential to the possibility of resurrection, which means that the notion of resurrection was not as foreign as some scholars have supposed.

### 7.3.1. 37:1-14

(i) In a similar manner to chapters 31 and 32, chapter 37 exhibits language and phraseology that various scholars have observed as peculiar to Ezekiel. The initial phrase, *היתה עלי יד יהוה*, '*The hand of the Lord was upon me*' signifies an aspect of the prophetic experience, and it occurs six times in Ezekiel: 1:3, 3:14, 22, 33:22, 37:1, and 40:1 (cf. 8:1).<sup>373</sup> Commenting on 1:3, and each of the examples mentioned above, Greenberg (1983: 41-42) interprets this phrase as an expression of a trance or seizure, and one that is most peculiar to Ezekiel.<sup>374</sup> Eichrodt (1970: 54, 507) acknowledges the same experience for other prophets, citing 1 Sam. 10:6, and likewise describes the phenomenon as an ecstatic

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<sup>373</sup> Phrases describing the hand, or power, of the Lord upon someone for specific empowerment or vision occur most often in prophetic texts, with the greatest concentration in Ezekiel. Cf. 1 Kgs. 18:46; Isa. 8:11; Ezek. 1:3, 3:14, 22, 8:1, 33:22, 37:1, 40:1; Ezra 7:6, 28; 2 Chr. 29:25 (cf. also Jer. 15:17). An interesting example in 1 Sam. 5:6-7 describes the hand of the Lord as heavy upon the people of Ashdod, where the result is being stunned or terrified and stricken with tumours while in the presence of the ark of the covenant.

<sup>374</sup> Greenberg (1983: 42) insists that other prophets mention the Lord's hand upon them as nothing more than divine compulsion, whereas Ezekiel's use of the phrase indicates susceptibility to seizures. The greater concentration of the description of being under God's hand/power as part of the visionary experience is certainly found in Ezekiel. However, it is more likely that, as Greenberg later writes (2010: 395), Ezekiel's extensive training, as a priest well-versed in the traditions and literature of his people, accounts for the prophet's more avid use of such prophetic idioms.

trance; that is, in the prophetic experience the hand of God is an overpowering and compelling force that changes a man (cf. Ezek. 32:22).

In 1b, the visionary component of Ezekiel's prophetic experience is introduced with the phrase, *ויוצאני ברוח יהוה ויניחני* 'he brought me out in the spirit of the Lord and set me down'<sup>375</sup>. This is not literal transportation (Greenberg, 1997: 742), but these initial prophetic phrases in 1a-1b are significant, as they qualify Ezekiel's valley itself as another visionary element conceptualized in his mind's eye.

Regarding *הבקעה* 'The Valley', it is difficult to be certain of its precise location, but if it is to be considered an actual locale where Ezekiel has his visions, and also a place in the present abject reality of the exiles, then, in relation to 3:22-23 and 8:4, it is perhaps somewhere in the lower Mesopotamian valley (Joyce, 2007: 81, 208). Rasmussen (NIDOTTE, 1: 704) notes that *בקעה* typically refers to valleys outside of the land of Israel, and it is also thought that *הבקעה* here may refer to the valley of Dura (cf. Dan. 3:1).<sup>376</sup> If indeed *הבקעה* in 3:22-23, 8:4, and 37:1ff is the valley of Dura, or some such location in the lower Mesopotamian plain, the dry bones, as a symbol of the hopelessness and spiritual deadness of the exiles in their present circumstances, is a suitable metaphor.

Morgenstern (1960: 181), presents an alternative, where, in light of Zech. 14:4f and Targum *Shir Hashirim* 5:8, Ezekiel's valley in chapter 37 is to be located at the foot of the Mount of Olives, or

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<sup>375</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 254n) states that it is surprising to find YHWH as the subject of *ברוח יהוה*, but notes that this is supported by the versions, and is comparable with *ברוח אלהים* in 11:24.

<sup>376</sup> In contrast to an understanding of *בקעה* as a derivative of the verb *בקע* "cleave, divide, break open" (see Hamilton, NIDOTTE, 1: 702-04), here Rasmussen considers *בקעה* to be a broad plain or valley that is not to be located in the mountains. He considers the support for this overwhelming (cf. Gen. 11:2; Deut. 34:3; Josh. 11:17, 12:7; Ezek. 3:22, 8:4; Zech. 12:11; Dan. 3:1; Neh. 6:2; 2 Chron. 35:22). In 3:22-23, Cooke (1936: 46) interprets *הבקעה* as "the wide plain of Babylonia, with mountains in the distance", and states that this is the proper meaning of *בקעה*. He reiterates this interpretation for 37:1ff (p. 397). Zimmerli (1979: 157) questions whether the same location is intended for both 3:22-23 and 31:7ff, but states that in 3:22 at least *הבקעה* refers to "the wide alluvial plain in Babylon". Greenberg (1983: 101), however, states that *בקעה* means literally: "cleft, opening", presumably according to the verb *בקע*. He goes on to say that *בקעה* is "a geographic term for a valley surrounded by hills", which he then affirms is extended to "the wide plain of Euphrates in Babylonia".

Jehoshaphat. Not only is this the valley where judgment takes place in Joel 3:2 and Zech 14:4, but it is also where there are many graves. While Ezekiel's prophetic experience itself is not taking place in the vicinity of Jerusalem, Morgenstern's theory is an attractive hermeneutical solution, as it allows for an understanding where the valley of dry bones is more congruent with the opening of graves. Cooke (1936: 397) also highlights an important distinction between reality and vision, that the prophet sees with his physical eyes "the familiar surface of the plain; but before the eyes of his mind, and just as visibly though, of course, not really there, lay the dry bones". In this way, Ezekiel, in his priestly mind's eye, may refer to one of the valleys at home in Jerusalem, even though he, along with the people, are outside of the land in exile. The definite noun **הַבְּקָעָה** may then be taken as a toponym for one of the valleys that surround Jerusalem, especially as this is where many burials occurred (Jehoshaphat and Hinnom valleys). In other words, the burial valley is outside of and away from the city, and thus in the vision becomes a symbol of exile and national death outside of the land (cf. Isa. 5:14). The obverse of this is reentry into the city after the people exit their graves, which is a figurative reversal of exile.

The final phrase in 1d – **וְהָיָא מְלֵאָה עֲצָמוֹת** – *'And it was full of bones'* – may further support viewing **הַבְּקָעָה** as a visionary reference to one of the burial valleys around the city of Jerusalem. Levenson (2006: 157-58) notes that some scholars consider the imagery of the scattered, disarticulated bones in an open valley to be comparable with the Zoroastrian practice of leaving corpses exposed. He also points out, however, that while the valley of dry bones may appear at first to fit the Persian model well, the opening of graves in verses 12-14 does not.

When the people ascend from their graves in verses 12-13, it seems to function independently, which is somewhat jarring when their physical location is unknown, and when they are already revived and standing on their feet in verse 10. It is natural then to separate these two images of the valley of dry bones and the exodus from their graves, creating two distinct resurrection motifs: a) physical

reconstitution and revivification, and b) exiting their graves alive. However, two interpretive possibilities exist to explain the ostensible discord:

1. Verses 1-10 describe the revivification of the people from their state of utter despondency and spiritual desiccation in exile, and verses 12-14 describe their physical return to the land of Israel. The two images are, in other words, simply two steps in the resurrection/restoration process, and need not be viewed as independent of each other. First, the people are to find renewed hope and reconciliation to their god, and second, they will be returned to their own land. The description of the reversal of decomposition of corpses sees the entire nation being spiritually revived with new hope, whereas the exodus from the graves is used to describe their physical uprooting from their place of sojourn and return to their own land.

2. The graves in verses 12-14 are physically part of the valley in the same vision. As mentioned above, if in the prophet's imagination, the message of the vision is conveyed to him through imagery that is familiar (Jerusalem – the place of his everyday life as a priest), we may then interpret the valley of dry bones as a burial valley and part of Jerusalem's surrounding necropolis. In this way, the imagery of the valley of dry bones might function as one large bone repository in a national family tomb, perhaps of a type that was common in Iron Age Judah and Jerusalem known as the bench tomb.<sup>377</sup> The family, in this case, is the 'whole house of Israel' (כל בית ישראל) mentioned in verse 11.

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<sup>377</sup> The Judean bench tomb was a rock-cut tomb with hewn benches upon which the deceased were laid and left to decompose for up to a year before the fully desiccated and disarticulated skeletal remains were gathered together and placed into a pit carved out in a separate part of the tomb. This was done in order to clear the burial bench for when future family members would pass away. According to Osborne (2011: 35), this was the "signature burial form of Iron II Judah from the eighth to sixth centuries B.C.E.". In the Jehoshaphat (Kidron) valley, there are also many rock-cut tombs of the type containing bone repositories. Johnston (2002: 61) maintains that the term 'secondary burial' is misleading, as it suggests actual reburial, when bones, along with other grave goods, were simply removed and swept into the bone repository or pit with seemingly no signs of respect in order to make room for a new corpse. For this reason, Johnston asserts that the practice should be called 'secondary deposition'.

(ii) The phrase *והעבירני עליהם סביב סביב* ‘*And he caused me to pass over them around, around*’ in 2a may either suggest that in his vision Ezekiel is viewing the valley or mass grave of dry bones in some way from a bird’s eye perspective, or, once set down in the middle of the valley he is taken in circles around the bones. The repeated adverb, *סביב סביב*, is emphatic and seems to indicate a circular motion. The LXX renders this with the phrase *κυκλόθεν κύκλω* ‘*around [in a] circle*’. *מאד* ‘*very dry*’ and *רבות מאד* ‘*very many*’ – *יבש* and *רב* are symbols of a) spiritual hopelessness and listlessness of the people and, b) the totality of it in terms of the entire nation of Israel. The emphasis on the degree of desiccation and mass number of bones anticipates verse 11: the ‘*whole house of Israel*’ (*כל בית ישראל*) has been cut off, their hope has perished, and their bones are dried up (*יבשו עצמותינו ואבדה תקותנו נגזרנו לנו*).

(iii) *בן אדם* ‘*Mortal/Son of man*’ – If we are to render *בן אדם* as ‘*mortal*’, then the appellation lends some irony to the divine rhetorical question.<sup>378</sup> Ezekiel is a living being, but a mortal man standing amongst the dead, and they are of course very dead (dry). Addressing Ezekiel as a mortal, followed by his rhetorical question, effectively underscores God’s authority and implies his infinite power to raise the dead from what would otherwise be the point of no return. *התחינה העצמות האלה* ‘*Can these bones live?*’. Schöpflin (2009: 70) sees this question as foreshadowing what might and will happen. The dryness of the bones in the previous verse underscores the absurdity of the rhetorical question, to which the expected answer is an emphatic *no*. With that said, Ezekiel’s answer to God’s question, *אתה ידעת, אדני יהוה* ‘*O my Lord God, you know!*’, establishes YHWH’s supremacy, but also the expectation that the bones will, in fact, be raised.

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<sup>378</sup> The construct *בן אדם* ‘*son of man*’ is of course very common in the HB. However, as has been the pattern with Ezekiel, *בן אדם* as an address to the prophet by God is yet another Ezekielian quirk, where the prophet is addressed as such by God ninety-three times throughout Ezekiel. Dan. 8:17 is the only instance outside of Ezekiel where an individual is addressed directly as *בן אדם*. There, it is the angel Gabriel who addresses Daniel.

(iv) הנבא ‘Prophesy’ – The niphil imperative of נבא is most frequently employed in Ezekiel, approximately twenty-five times,<sup>379</sup> and only occurs once outside of Ezekiel in Amos 7:15. Moreover, the command to prophesy to or over (על) inanimate objects, such as the dry bones, or to (אל) the רוח ‘breath’ (37:9), appears to be a unique feature of this chapter.<sup>380</sup> While it may seem oddly humorous, the uniqueness of the prophet being commanded to speak God’s words to dry bones, perhaps highlights the extent to which the nation had become lost, hopeless, and bereft of life and vitality in the exile; that is, they are not named as the nation of Israel in their current state until the point where they are reconstituted as living beings and revived in verse 11.

(v) Verse 5 is a continuation of the commandment in verse 4, and functions as an introductory statement before the longer elaboration on the main resurrection event in the following verse. The initial phrase, כה אמר אדני יהוה ‘Thus says my Lord, the Lord’ is part of the prophetic formula that begins in 4c, and only in prophetic texts occurs, but by far most frequently in Ezekiel (one hundred twenty-one times).<sup>381</sup> הנה אני מביא בכם רוח וחייתם ‘Behold, I am bringing breath into you, and you shall live’. The pronoun plus hiphil participle, אני מביא ‘I am bringing’, may suggest that God is bringing the breath from elsewhere, which anticipates מארבע רוחות ‘the four winds’ in verse 9; God will bring the breath of life that encompasses and fills the world with life from all the corners of the

<sup>379</sup> Ezek. 6:2, 11:4 (x2), 13:2, 17, 20:46, 21:2, 9, 14, 28, 25:2, 28:21, 29:2, 30:2, 34:2 (x2), 35:2, 36:3, 6, 37:4, 9, 12, 38:2, 14, 39:1. Müller (TDOT, 9: 147) also notes the frequency of the niphil imperative in Ezekiel, stating that its “repetition is intended to counter a weaker and weaker legitimation of prophetic speech”.

<sup>380</sup> Other unusual objects of prophecy in Ezekiel include: 4:7 – prophesying against the siege of Jerusalem; 6:2 – against the mountains of Israel; 20:46 – against the southern forest land in the Negev; 21:2 – against the sanctuaries of Jerusalem; 35:2 – against Mount Seir. It should also be noted that the dry bones and the breath of life are prophesied to or over (על and אל), but not *against* in the negative sense of judgment. Schöpflin (2009: 71n) notes that in prophetic speech “inanimate objects may be personified”, and likewise compares Ezek. 6:2, 35:2, and 36:1.

<sup>381</sup> **Isa.** 7:7, 10:24, 22:15, 28:16, 30:15, 49:22, 52:4, 65:13; **Jer.** 7:20; **Ezek.** 2:4, 3:11, 3:27, 5:5, 7, 8, 6:3, 11, 7:2, 5, 11:7, 16, 17, 12:10, 19, 23, 28, 13:3, 8, 13, 18, 20, 14:4, 6, 21, 15:6, 16:3, 36, 59, 17:3, 9, 19, 22, 20:3, 5, 27, 30, 39, 47, 21:24, 26, 28, 22:3, 19, 23:22, 28, 32, 35, 46, 24:3, 6, 9, 21, 25:3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16, 26:3, 7, 15, 19, 27:3, 28:2, 6, 12, 22, 25, 29:3, 8, 13, 19, 30:2, 10, 13, 22, 31:10, 15, 32:3, 11, 33:25, 27, 34:2, 10, 11, 17, 20, 35:3, 14, 36:2-7, 13, 22, 33, 37, 37:5, 9, 12, 19, 21, 38:3, 10, 14, 17, 39:1, 17, 25, 43:18, 44:6, 9, 45:9, 18, 46:1, 16, 47:13; **Am.** 3:11, 5:3; **Ob.** 1.

globe to revive his people.

Block (1998: 376) finds רוּחַ in this verse ambiguous with regard to its meaning as either ‘breath’ of ‘spirit’, but he also admits that no life is possible without “the divine animating force”. The LXX takes the qal consecutive, וַחַיִּיתֶם ‘and they shall live’, and conflates it with רוּחַ translating as πνεῦμα ζωῆς ‘breath of life’. Implicitly, the breath that animates is the breath of life, though it is not here explicitly named.

(vi) רוּחַ וַחַיִּיתֶם ‘And I will put breath into you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD’. Out of all the terms typically associated with biblical resurrection, only חַיָּה occurs in Ezek. 37 to refer to the revivification of the dead (verses 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14), whereas death itself is expressed via the dryness of the disarticulated bones.<sup>382</sup> It is notable that in verses 5, 6 and 8, רוּחַ does not bear the definite article, but progresses from רוּחַ ‘breath’, to הַרוּחַ ‘the breath’ in verse 9 (alongside רוּחוֹת מְאַרְבַּע ‘from the four winds’), and then to רוּחִי ‘my spirit’ in verse 14.<sup>383</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 260-61) suggests that the sequence of bone to sinews to flesh and finally skin reflects Ezekiel’s priestly knowledge of dissecting sacrificial animals. He also compares phraseology from the Pyramid Texts (572 and 730) and sees in his chosen texts a summoning of the dead to life. However, Zimmerli’s chosen texts only mention the head of NN fastened to bones, and the instruction to protect it from coming loose. Furthermore, there is no explicit mention of sinews or other anatomical components, and the summoning of the dead to life is not immediately obvious. His comparison is therefore not instructive. Block (1997: 376), while he affirms Zimmerli’s position regarding Ezekiel’s

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<sup>382</sup> On Dan. 12:2 and Isa. 26:19, Nickelsburg (2006: 31) observes that these passages contain resurrection language. Nickelsburg lists חַיָּה, מוֹת, נְבִלָה, קוּם, עִפָּר, and רְפֹאִים as resurrection language, but neglects קִיּוּן, which Greenspoon (1981: 253) considers to be the only certain resurrection term. עָמַר in Ezek. 37:10 may also be considered a resurrection term, as it describes their state of being alive in contrast to lying down dead (cf. Dan. 12:13).

<sup>383</sup> The LXX does not reflect this progression. Verse 5: Ἴδου ἐγὼ φέρω εἰς ὑμᾶς πνεῦμα ζωῆς ‘Behold, I am bringing into you the breath of life’; verse 6: πνεῦμά μου ‘my breath/spirit’; and verse 7: καὶ πνεῦμα οὐκ ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς ‘but there was no breath in them’.

understanding of anatomy as a priest, also states that the sequence reverses the decomposition process. Greenberg (2010: 743) cites *Genesis Rabbah* 14:5 and the bathhouse analogy, where the last item of clothing removed is the first to be put on when dressing to leave. In the case of decomposition, the sinews are the last to decompose leaving the bones disarticulated. In this light, the description of reconstitution in verse 6 is likely intended as the reverse of a corpse being reduced to bone in the process of decomposition.

Sinews to flesh and then the skin is logically the reversal of the decomposition process, but all this comes before the spirit or breath is given to make life possible. This is also perhaps an allusion to the creation of Adam in Genesis. In Gen. 2:7, Adam becomes a living being (לִנְפֶשׁ חַיָּה) when God breathes the breath of life (נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים) into his nostrils. Once Adam is brought to life, God places him in Eden. A discernible progression from dust to Eden in Adam's creation is comparable with the resurrection from bones to the land of Israel in Ezek. 37: a) Adam formed from dust, b) Adam is given the breath of life, and becomes a living being, and c) Adam is brought to Eden and lives in communion with God. In Ezek. 37, the progression is similar: a) the nation is reconstituted from dry bones, b) they are given breath, and live, and c) they are returned to the land of Israel to live in communion with God.

The initial phrase in verse 5, '*Behold, I am bringing breath into you, and you shall live*', changes to '*I will put breath into you, and you shall live*'. Following the description of revivification from bones to bodies with skin, the use of נָתַן, as the final active step, bolsters the allusion to Adam's creation. Even if it is not Ezekiel's primary goal to point to Gen. 2:7ff, the comparison of the creation of a living being with the resurrection of the dead to newly formed living beings demonstrates the prophet's grounding in biblical literature, which of course Ezekiel must have had, as a priest.

(vii) וַיְהִי קוֹל כְּהִנְבֹּאֵי 'And there was a noise, as I was prophesying'. Cooke (1936: 399) suggests that קוֹל may have been introduced as a gloss on רָעַשׁ 'shaking/rattling'. The LXX also

appears to ignore קול and instead reads: καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμός ‘*and behold, an earthquake*’.<sup>384</sup> Greenberg (2010: 743), however, notes the pairing of קול and רעש at 3:13f, and views the separation of the two nouns here as intentional, producing parallel clauses that give a heightened effect “as by slow motion”. That being said, given the detailed nature of the resurrection metaphor, the MT’s description of the rattling of the bones with progression from קול to רעש, does heighten the drama and is consistent in style with the level of detail in the rest of the vision. Furthermore, the noun רעש occurs seventeen times in the HB, and in eleven of these occurrences it is either directly paired with קול, or both nouns appear together in the same context.<sup>385</sup> In this light, the pairing in 37:7 is arguably original.

כהנבאי ‘*As I was prophesying*’ – The process of re-composition and revivification begins as Ezekiel is speaking God’s word, which may also relate back to creation. In Gen. 1, God speaks creation into existence, and similarly announces the creation of mankind (cf. the cohortative of עשה in Gen. 1:26 – נעשה אדם ‘*Let us make mankind*’).

ותקרבו עצמות עצם אל עצמו ‘*And the bones came together – bone to his bone*’. The bones finding their match indicates that an individual’s remains are in some way significant, and the importance of this phrase lies in its emphasis on identity.<sup>386</sup> While this is not a prophecy about individual resurrection in the same way as Dan. 12:2, individuality is to some extent implied here in the sense of bones finding their correct match. This may also anticipate the identity of the bones as the nation of Israel in verse 11. The exposure, disarticulation and scattering of the nation’s bones spells lost identity and alienation from God (cf. Ps. 53:6; Jer. 8:1-2; Ezek. 6:5), whereas the re-articulation

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<sup>384</sup> In 3:12-13, the LXX acknowledges both nouns in the MT and translates respectively as φωνὴν σεισμοῦ μεγάλου ‘*a sound of a great earthquake*’ (3:12), and καὶ φωνὴ τοῦ σεισμοῦ ‘*and a sound of an earthquake*’ (3:13).

<sup>385</sup> 1 Kgs 19:11-12; Isa. 29:6; Jer. 10:22, 47:3; Ezek. 3:12-13, 37:7; Nah. 3:2; Job 39:24. An occurrence of רעש in Am. 1:1 is followed by קול in 1:2, describing God’s thunderous voice. However, the two nouns are not obviously connected here as in the aforementioned texts.

<sup>386</sup> The LXX is emphatic and adds the word ἁρμονία ‘*harmony*’ to express that the bones are finding their exact harmonious match: ἐκάτερον πρὸς τὴν ἁρμονίαν αὐτοῦ ‘*each one to its own joint*’.

here is the reverse of this, and the beginning of a return to their identity as God's people. Had there been non-Israelites amongst the dead, for instance, it would make little sense to attach a Persian's bones to those of an Israelite.

(viii) וְרוּחַ אֵין בָּהֶם (viii) 'but there was no breath in them'. The ostensibly partial fulfilment of God's word from verse 6 is often noted by commentators.<sup>387</sup> This, however, highlights the special significance of the life-giving breath that is yet to complete the resurrection process. In exile, the dry bones metaphorically represent spiritual desiccation and the hopelessness of the people, whereas the breath represents life, spiritual vigour and hope renewed. This is first conveyed briefly and concisely in verse 5. What is the need for this ostensible surplus of detail if verse 5 is sufficient? Perhaps the material components of sinews, flesh and skin are symbolic of God's material provision in exile, whereas the breath, once it is received, is what re-energizes and spreads life and hope among the people. According to the metaphor then, the breath is perhaps the word of God delivered through the prophet for the benefit of the people, and the call for their return to God, who will then return them to their own land.

(ix) אֵל הַרוּחַ הַנּוֹבָא 'Prophesy to the breath'. Block (1997: 377) identifies הַרוּחַ as the breath that will breathe (נִפְחָ) on the bones of the slain in order for them to live. The root נִפְחָ is used in the creation of man in Gen. 2:7, which Greenberg (2010: 744) sees an unmistakable allusion. The breath (הַרוּחַ), in this instance, is then implicitly the breath of life.

מֵאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת 'from the four winds' refers to the four corners of the earth, and implicitly the dispersion of the people.<sup>388</sup> In Zech. 2:6, the four winds similarly refers to the dispersion of the people:

*Alas, Alas! Flee from the land of the north, declares the LORD; for like the four winds of the heavens, I have scattered you, declares the LORD*

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<sup>387</sup> So for example: Block (1997: 376); Joyce (2007: 209); Zimmerli (1983: 261).

<sup>388</sup> Taylor (1969: 238).

Interestingly, the LXX reads this verse as a declaration that YHWH will gather the people from the four winds reading כַּאֲרֵבַע as מֵאַרְבַּע and פִּרְשָׁתִּי as אֲסַפְתִּי: διότι ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ συνάξω ὑμᾶς ‘for from the four winds of heaven I will gather you’.<sup>389</sup>

In relation to the exile of the nation then, and leading up to verse 11, מֵאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת is perhaps an initial indicator in chapter 37 that the intended scope of this prophecy envisages the return to the land of the entire nation of Israel.<sup>390</sup> Additionally, ‘the four winds’ and ‘the breath’ refer to the breath of life, or wind, that blows through the world,<sup>391</sup> or in other words, the breath that animates all life universally (cf. Isa. 42:5; Job 33:4; Eccl. 12:7). In this way, the breath is summoned for the special purpose of reanimating the dead nation.

בְּהָרוּגִים הָאֵלֶּה ‘these slain’.<sup>392</sup> Some scholars understand the phrase to indicate that the dead here are people who have been slain in battle.<sup>393</sup> However, this is incongruous with everything else in the context: the ‘whole house of Israel’, the Judean exiles, and a people metaphorically dead and cut off. Earlier in Ezekiel 31-32, those slain are described by way of חָלַל. If the aforementioned allusion to Gen. 2:7 is accepted, then perhaps the use of הָרוּג may allude to the notion of murder more specifically, as in Gen. 4:8, or untimely and unjust death. In this way, הָרוּג not only denotes those

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<sup>389</sup> Smith (1984: 194).

<sup>390</sup> Greenberg (2010: 744) notes the identical use of a cognate phrase in Akkadian *šar erbetti*, stating that the Hebrew phrase perhaps originates in Mesopotamia, but he does not indicate how this might inform our interpretation of its use here and in other biblical passages.

<sup>391</sup> TDOT (9: 486).

<sup>392</sup> The LXX renders this phrase as τοὺς νεκροὺς τούτους ‘these corpses’. While νεκρός clearly refers to corpses here in verse 9, it is also used to refer to moral and spiritual depravity to the extent that one may be considered in a sense dead (BDAG: 667), which harmonises well with the metaphor and the state of the people as it is elucidated in verse 11: ‘These bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones have dried up, and our hope has perished; we are cut off’. For this use of νεκρός, cf. Luke 15:24, 32.

<sup>393</sup> So Greenberg (2010: 744); Block (1998: 377); Cooke (1936: 400); Olley (2009: 490) notes the militaristic overtones of MT’s mention of the ‘slain’ who become ‘a vast army’, but points out that the “LXX avoids militaristic overtones with the neutral ‘dead’ becoming an ‘assembly, multitude’; Zimmerli (1983: 261-62) notes that, while those who died in the battles with the Babylonians may be included here, the reference to the slain is only “incidental and is not a central element of the image”.

slain in battle, but also innocent non-combatants who have been slaughtered by enemy soldiers or captors in the event of sacking Jerusalem, along with other Judean and Israelite cities. Additionally, in Isa. 26:20 הרג is used to describe those dead who are no longer covered or concealed by the earth. It is important to remember, however, that the text is still referring to the exiles and the nation who are figuratively dead.

(x) והנבאתי כאשר צוני ותבוא בהם הרוח (x) *‘And I prophesied just as he commanded me, and the breath came into them’*.<sup>394</sup> Comparisons with Gen. 2:7 are common, and Block (1997: 379) notes the “two-phased process of resuscitation” relating to the creation of Adam; that is, the bodies are reconstituted but not alive until they receive the breath of life just as the lump of soil that was Adam did not become a living being until God had breathed his life into it.

ויהיו ויעמדו על רגליהם *‘And they lived, and they stood upon their feet’*. As noted earlier, this sentence closely resembles that of 2 Kgs. 13:21d, where the dead man springs back to life upon touching Elisha’s bones: ויהי ויקם על רגליו *‘And he lived, and he rose upon his feet’*. If indeed the stories of Elisha and Elijah were well-known in Ezekiel’s day, this sentence, on the one hand, may be evidence of Ezekiel’s extensive knowledge of such texts. On the other hand, it may also support the suggestion by Puech (1993: 40) that, even if the notion of resurrection was at this time a mere novelty, for the metaphor in Ezek. 37 to be relevant and convincing, there must have been some familiarity with the concept or possibility.

(xi) העצמות האלה כל בית ישראל *‘These bones are the entire house of Israel’*. This phrase describes not only the Judean exiles to Babylon but also the northern kingdom of Israel (Greenberg, 2010: 744).

אמרים יבשו עצמותינו ואברה תקותנו *‘They say, ‘our bones are dried up and our hope has*

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<sup>394</sup> Verses 7 and 10 contain the only biblical occurrences of the first person niphil and hitpael forms of נבא, and Ezekiel is the only prophet who speaks of himself in this way.

*perished*' (cf. Ps. 88:6f). After receiving sinews, flesh and skin, they themselves claim that their bones are dried up. This indicates that their exile is a state of death, having been cut off from YHWH; that is, they have no hope in being reconciled to their God and returning to their own land (cf. Prov. 17:22).<sup>395</sup> The metaphor here, as Greenberg (745) notes, is the opposite of the depiction of healthy, moist bones in other passages, such as Prov. 3:8, 15:33, and Isa. 66:14.

נִגְזְרוּ לָנוּ 'We are utterly cut off'. This phrase is synonymous with the exile of the people and being cut off from their own land. Their circumstances in exile equate to a deathlike state, a metaphor that we find elsewhere. The niph'al of נִגְזַר is poetically connected to being cut off in death in Isa. 53:8-9, Pss. 31:23, 88:6, and Lam. 3:54.

(xii) לְכֵן הַנְּבֵא וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם 'Therefore, prophesy, and say unto them'. The prophet now delivers God's message to living beings. God acknowledges that in exile they are dead, and Babylon is identified as the grave of the nation,<sup>396</sup> whereupon, God speaks through the prophet and declares: הִנֵּה אֲנִי פֹתַח אֶת קְבֻרוֹתֵיכֶם 'Behold, I am opening your graves'. If the valley can be pictured as a large familial gathering (כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל) of desiccated bones into one large bone repository, then the exodus from their graves finds continuity with the valley. Conversely, the mention of tombs is perhaps also a reiteration of the same message with a separate resurrection metaphor. In his argument regarding the ancient debate about the state of the covenant with YHWH, Olyan (2009: 494-95) notes the unexpected association of the deity with tombs and the remains of the dead, and suggests that this striking image "functions to underscore YHWH's continued willingness to act for his people" according to the covenant.

וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל 'and I will bring you back to the land of Israel'. This statement solidifies unity between verses 1-11 and 12-14 by clarifying that exile in a foreign land equates to

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<sup>395</sup> Olyan (2009: 493).

<sup>396</sup> Eichrodt (1970: 510).

national death. The exact construct **ישראל אדמת** occurs seventeen times, and only in Ezekiel.<sup>397</sup> The exact construct **ישראל ארץ** occurs only eleven times in the HB, and three of those occurrences are in Ezekiel.<sup>398</sup>

(xiii) **ידיעתם כי אני יהוה** ‘*And you shall know that I am the Lord*’. This phrase occurs most frequently in the book of Ezekiel, approximately seventy-two times, with four occurrences in chapter 37 alone. In verse 6, God says that the people, once re-embodied, and before they have the breath of life, will know that he is *the Lord*. The progression from restored life to being restored to their own land goes hand in hand with knowledge of their God, which is the qualitatively new life that characterizes the hope of resurrection. The seemingly impossible miracles that God performs will demonstrate God’s sovereignty and the people will recognize YHWH.

(xiv) **ונתתי רוחי בכם וחייתם** ‘*I will put my spirit within you and you shall live*’. In verses 1-11, **הרוח** and the four winds appear as the breath of life that animates the dead bodies, whereas here it is explicitly God’s spirit **רוחי** ‘*my spirit*’.<sup>399</sup>

**יהוה דברתי** ‘*I, the Lord, have spoken*’. This exact phrase occurs fifteen times in the HB with all but one (Num. 14:35) occurring in Ezekiel.<sup>400</sup> With the additional declaration **ועשיתי** ‘*and I will act*’ (cf. 17:24, 22:14, 24:14, 36:36), Block (1997: 383) sees this as a signatory formula reminding the people of the veracity of God’s word, and that the restoration will be God’s self-revelation. Just as resurrecting the dead is conceivable only by the absolute power of YHWH, what was deemed impossible and devoid of hope – their return to the land of Israel after the nation’s demise – will be

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<sup>397</sup> Ezek. 7:2, 11:17, 12:19, 22, 13:9, 18:2, 20:38, 42, 21:7 (2x), 25:3, 6, 33:24, 36:6, 37:12, 38:18 (2x).

<sup>398</sup> 1 Sam. 13:19; 2 Kgs 5:2, 4, 6:23; Ezek. 27:17, 40:2, 47:18; 1 Chron. 22:2; 2 Chron. 2:16, 30:25, 34:7.

<sup>399</sup> **רוחי** ‘*my spirit*’ is attested thirty-three times in the HB. God referring to his own spirit occurs twice in Gen. 6:3, and Isa. 30:1 in a negative sense, and ten times in a positive sense of bringing life and the blessings of the spirit: cf. Isa. 42:1, 44:3, 59:21; Ezek. 36:27, 37:14, 39:29; Joel 3:1-2 (Eng. 2:28-29); Hag. 2:5; Zech. 4:6.

<sup>400</sup> Num. 14:35; Ezek. 5:13, 15, 17, 17:21, 24, 21:22, 37, 22:14, 24:14, 26:14, 30:12, 34:24, 36:36, 37:14.

achieved only by Israel's God.

### 7.3.2. 37:15-28

Due to lack of space, this section of chapter 37 will only be discussed very briefly, as it does not directly refer to issues of death and resurrection. However, a few important details are worth mentioning in connection with verses 1-14.

First, as it has been shown above, there is a noticeable tendency for Ezekiel to exploit specific phrases. This is done more frequently than in other prophetic and biblical texts where the same, or comparable, phrases are found. In verse 15, the prophet states: *וַיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: 'And the word of the Lord came to me, saying'*. This exact phrase occurs seven times in Jeremiah, with three further occurrences bearing slight variations: once in Zechariah, with two further occurrences bearing slight variations, and approximately forty-six times throughout Ezekiel, with three further occurrences bearing slight variations. An additional variation of the phrase occurs in 1 Chr. 22:8.<sup>401</sup> The importance of this is that it constitutes a stylistic uniformity that serves to tie the message of verses 15-28 with that of 1-14. Effectively, the two sections 1-14 and 15-28 form a textual diptych bearing a comparable message of complete national restoration, and specifically both the northern and southern kingdoms. In this way, verses 15-28 are a reiteration of the chapter's overall message concerning national restoration, not only of the Judeans but of the entire nation of Israel reunified as one kingdom under the Davidic king.

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<sup>401</sup> **1 Chr.** 22:8 (אֵלַי in place of עָלַי). **Jer.** 1:4, 11, 13 (plus אֵלַי שְׁנִייתָ); 2:1; 13:3 (plus אֵלַי שְׁנִייתָ), 8; 16:1; 18:5; 24:4; 32:26 - הִיָּה without the waw consec. **Ezek.** 3:16; 6:1; 7:1; 11:14; 12:1, 8 (plus בְּבִקְרָה), 17, 21, 26; 13:1; 14:2, 12; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1, 11; 18:1; 20:2; 21:1, 6, 13, 23; 22:1, 17, 23; 23:1; 24:1 (לֵאמֹר omitted), 15, 20 (slight syntactical variation due to the introduction וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם: the verb הִיָּה follows God's name.); 25:1; 26:1; 27:1; 28:1, 11, 20; 29:1, 17; 30:1, 20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:1, 23; 34:1; 35:1; 36:16; 37:15; 38:1. **Zech.** 6:9; 7:4 (plus צְבָאוֹת); 8:1 (אֵלַי omitted).

In verses 16 and 17, the prophet is commanded by God to take two sticks, or trees (Heb: עֵץ; Grk: ῥάβδος), that are to represent the northern and southern kingdoms and to write on them: ‘For Judah, and for the children of Israel, his companions’ and ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and the all the house of Israel, his companions’, respectively. Then, as a symbol of the reunification of both kingdoms into one, Ezekiel is to join the two sticks and carry them in the sight of the people. Here the two kingdoms are represented by two sticks. Already, we have seen the nations of chapters 31 and 32, including perhaps Israel (כָּל עֵצֵי עֲדָן), represented as trees. Here, it seems likely that some form of stick or rod is intended, but the comparable symbolism is noteworthy.<sup>402</sup>

In support of the above, for the two sticks in verse 16 we find the phrases וּלְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חִבְרוּ ‘and for the children of Israel associated with him’ referring to the stick of Judah and perhaps Benjamin with him; וְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל חִבְרוּ ‘and all the house of Israel associated with him’ referring to the stick of Joseph (Ephraim) and presumably the northern tribes, which is further clarified as such in verse 19: וּשְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חִבְרוּ ‘and the tribes of Israel associated with him’; and again in verse 21 we have אֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ‘the children of Israel’ referring to the entire nation of exiles. The emphasis on the entire nation and its restoration is unmistakable. Verse 22 explicitly states that they will no longer be two nations. Verses 24-25 state that they will be one nation and have one shepherd and one Davidic king forever, which may allude to the qualitatively new life of the resurrection in a restored world, but this is difficult to determine.<sup>403</sup> Finally, Verse 28 mentions the nation one last time in the chapter, but simply as Israel with the definite object marker: אֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל.

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<sup>402</sup> In an old article, W. E. Barnes (1938: 391-93) argued that, as nations are represented by trees elsewhere (cf. Ezek. 15:2ff. and 31:3ff.), where עֵץ is understood as a tree and not a stick, in Ezek. 37:16-17 עֵץ should likewise be understood as referring to trees. He argues that this understanding comes from the LXX’s use of ῥάβδος. However, ῥάβδος may, in fact, have been the translator’s choice for the fact that the word can refer to a royal sceptre (cf. Ps. 45:7 [LXX: 44:7]), and in this way, the rationale behind its use here is to connote a kingdom or sovereign nation.

<sup>403</sup> On verse 25, Weir (1962: 111-12) questions whether Ezekiel believed in some form of beatific afterlife. Initially, he states that the question did not trouble Ezekiel or his Israelite contemporaries, but in light of verse 25 concludes that this can “therefore not definitely decided in the negative”.

#### 7.4. SUMMARY

The macro-theme of Ezek. 37 is the restoration of the nation of Israel in its entirety. This is first expressed in verses 1-14 by way of the resurrection metaphor, which likens the state of exile to national death, but envisages the return from this death as a return of ‘*the whole house of Israel*’ (verse 11). Following verse 14, this message is reiterated in verses 15-28 in the prophet’s symbolic act of binding the two sticks inscribed with the respective names identifying the northern and southern kingdoms. Effectively, with both halves of the chapter together, we have a prophetic textual diptych foretelling the ultimate restoration of the entire nation of Israel into one kingdom.

It is possible that the Sheol and Resurrection material analyzed here was written by the same author. This is evidenced by the conspicuous accumulation of specific phrases, as a matter of style, which is a feature peculiar to Ezekiel. The importance of this observation is that, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., Ezekiel is writing about both Sheol and resurrection in a similar metaphorical way. This undermines the consensus that the two ideas are distinct. The presumption that there is a bifurcation between the concept of the underworld, as the “standard idea” in ancient Israel, and that of resurrection, as a concept that emerged later in the Second Temple period, is weakened by the possibility of single authorship of these three chapters. This is especially the case if Sheol and resurrection are both employed metaphorically to describe what happens to the nations in question.

As with resurrection in chapter 37, Sheol in chapters 31 and 32, with its attendant underworld phraseology, functions as a metaphorical description of the rise and fall of the nations in question. However, this is not a description of their actual residence in the underworld. This is clear from the fact that Egypt, as the focus nation, did not cease to exist, even if the nation’s status on the world stage was significantly diminished. God, furthermore, is the author of their prosperity and demise; the ultimate authority of God of Israel and YHWH’s sovereignty over all nations underlies all these chapters. This is also true of God in chapter 37. There, the impossibility of the return of the entire

nation of Israel, where all hope is lost and the nation in exile figuratively lies dead as a mass of dry, disarticulated bones, is emphatically affirmed as possible with YHWH.<sup>404</sup>

The shared concern of these three chapters is YHWH's ultimate authority over the fate of nations. Sheol is a metaphor for the fall of Assyria, Egypt, and others, whereas resurrection is a metaphor for the return and restoration of Israel after they have fallen. Given that both Sheol and resurrection or revivification of the dead are known to the author, it is all the more likely that, like Sheol, the concept of the dead rising in some sense was already known to Ezekiel's audience, even if it was considered an absurd idea.<sup>405</sup> This, however, only reinforces the message of the impossible being possible with YHWH, a notion we have already witnessed in the texts of 1 Sam. 2:6 and Deut. 32:39. Furthermore, for the metaphor of resurrection to function properly as such, the concept cannot have been a random notion concocted by Ezekiel; the concept was known, even if it was not a widespread or established belief in Ezekiel's time. It makes little sense to describe Sheol as a belief, and then to take its metaphorical use in chapters 31 and 32 as somehow reflecting a literal expectation of the prophet, but then to view the metaphor of resurrection as an independent idea that cannot similarly reflect at least the kernel of a belief.

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<sup>404</sup> Wright (2003: 120) notes the echoes of Gen. 1-2 with the promise of the breath of life, but also the fact that the resurrection of dry bones is not mere resuscitation, and that they "can only be brought to life by a new and unprecedented act of the creator god".

<sup>405</sup> Fox (1980: 10) argues that Ezekiel affirms the plausibility of the absurd (the return of the exiled nation) in the imagery of resurrection, as a rational argument could not prevail in achieving this. Fox asserts that Ezekiel, did not wish to teach the doctrine of individual resurrection, but used the imagery to persuade his audience to "expect the unexpected"; that is, to expect the return of the nation to its own land, a hope that had been lost and was now considered absurd.

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## BIBLICAL RESURRECTION AND THE LAND OF DUST

### 8.1. RESURRECTION IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

It is widely accepted that the concept of resurrection in early Judaism properly emerged late in the Second Temple period, where prior to its development the ancient Israelites held that everyone, good and bad alike, descended into Sheol (Day, 1996: 231; Collins, 1993: 394). However, like other aspects of Second Temple Judaism, such as the complex development of the concept of an eschatological Messiah,<sup>406</sup> resurrection is not a concept without roots in the HB. Indeed, there is ample reason to assert that the later Jewish belief in an eschatological resurrection of the dead drew much of its essential features from earlier biblical material. For this reason, it is important to delineate and define the essential features of biblical resurrection that carry through to the later, more developed belief or doctrine, and this chapter will aim to cover some of the primary material that is pertinent to this issue.

Of course, where resurrection appears in the HB, either as a metaphor (Ezek. 37) or as a literal raising of dead people (Dan. 12:2), there are only a handful of texts that clearly refer to the concept. Therefore, if we are to attempt a definition of biblical resurrection, then it is important to identify those features in the premier biblical texts commonly associated with the resurrection of the dead. Inevitably,

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<sup>406</sup> For a recent overview of the background of the problem of messianism, see Novenson (2017: 1-33). The similarities with the development of the doctrine of resurrection are notable. Both concepts have relatively few biblical sources clearly evidencing an earlier held belief, but both become similarly important concepts in Second Temple Judaism.

this will require an examination of shared language and salient themes.

Along with defining resurrection according to its early biblical appearances, this chapter will also seek to solidify linguistically, conceptually and theologically the connection or overlap between Sheol and biblical resurrection that I have hinted at throughout this study so far.

## **8.2. KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS RELATED TO RESURRECTION**

The following is an overview of the most significant passages relating to biblical resurrection. These passages constitute a body of material that may be viewed as antecedents for the later Jewish notion of an eschatological resurrection of the dead. Each passage contains thematic material directly pertaining to the reversal of death either literally, metaphorically, or potentially.

### **8.2.1. Deuteronomy 32:39 & 1 Samuel 2:6**

In both Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6, in the songs of Moses and Hannah, we are told that YHWH kills and bestows life. In Deut. 32:39, it is YHWH who speaks in the first person: ‘*I kill and I bestow life*’ (hiphil perf.: אָמַיִת; piel imperf.: אֶחַיֵּה). In 1 Sam. 2:6, Hannah is the speaker and proclaims the same axiom about God in the third person: ‘*The Lord kills and bestows life*’ (hiphil participle: מְחַיֶּה; piel participle: מַחֵיֵה).

There are some salient points to consider. First, the supremacy and all-encompassing power of Israel’s god is a common motif. As we will see, all the texts cited as resurrection texts in the HB, have divine agency as one of their principal themes.

Johnston (2002: 219) observes that in both the song of Moses and Hannah, the respective proclamations about God and his power to restore life or raise to life are almost casually asserted and that this theme is subordinate to the main themes of national vindication in Deut. 32:43 and personal

blessing in 1 Sam. 2:8-10. This, of course, is one of the main constituents of the concept of resurrection in Ezek. 37, Isa. 26:19, and Hos. 6:1-2.

Are these true statements proclaiming that the dead can literally be raised? If so, might these passages be considered antecedents to the later belief in an eschatological resurrection of the dead? Bailey (1979: 40) interprets this saying in 1 Sam. 2 as a metaphor and does not see here an intended reference to actual death and being raised from it. Rather, it is a continuation of the pattern of reversal of life's woes, and therefore YHWH's giving of life is something that happens in this life.<sup>407</sup> Similarly, for Deut. 32:39, Driver (1902: 378) insists that this is not a reference to resurrection but an affirmation of YHWH's power to rescue "from mortal peril".

Others, however, affirm the reference to the underworld and go even further. McCarter, Jr. (1980: 73) highlights *נַצְּקֵי אֶרֶץ* in 1 Sam. 2:8, and translates as "straits of the earth". He states that these "are the great rivers of the underworld". That being said, the thematic and lexical links between Deut. 32 and 1 Sam. 2 are notable: both 1 Sam. 2:6 and Deut. 32:39 affirm God's power to kill and bestow life, that YHWH is master of the cosmos, and in both contexts there are references to pillars/foundations of the earth, which is likely synonymous with the underworld (Deut. 32:22 and 1 Sam. 2:8). Levenson (2006: 173) highlights the mention of Sheol in 1 Sam. 2:6, and views this as a strong indicator that, given the theme of God's reversal of other injustices, raising up "from Sheol can mean only that he reverses death".

According to Elledge (2017: 200), the development of belief in resurrection in the Hellenistic period involved an intensive reevaluation of earlier texts and traditions. It is unsurprising then that such texts as Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6 would later be repurposed as biblical affirmations of resurrection. However, proclamations about the power of God to kill and bring to life are not, of course, true affirmations of resurrection, but given that later resurrection texts involve both national restoration, along with God's sovereignty over life, death and all peoples, these texts contain both the

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<sup>407</sup> Also cited by Johnston (2002: 219).

exact thematic material along with related vocabulary for them to function as resurrection antecedents.

Finally, these passages displayed two essential themes pertinent to our discussion: a) God's supremacy and ultimate power over life and death, where a return from death and Sheol is possible with YHWH, and b) national vindication and restoration. Furthermore, both texts occur in songs of praise. Linguistically, they utilize the same verbs in the hiphil and piel with reference to God's power (הָיָה and מָיָה), and in the wider context of each passage, the theme of national vindication is present. Importantly, both passages mention Sheol, along with comparable phrases that further allude to the cosmological role of the underworld: מוֹסְדֵי הַרִימִם '*foundations of the mountains*' and מִצְבְּי אֶרֶץ '*pillars of the earth*'.

### 8.2.2. 1 Kgs 17, 2 Kgs 4 & 13:20-21

While it is true that Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6 affirm God's power to give or restore life, it is also true that this is not stated as something that has already taken place in Israel's history, unless the Songs of Moses and Hannah were written much later on when the miracles of Elisha and Elijah were already well-known.<sup>408</sup> Though the resuscitation miracles performed by the two prophets in 1 Kgs 17:17-24 and 2 Kgs 4:18-37, along with the return to life of the dead man who touches Elisha's bones in 2 Kgs 13:20-21, are not resurrections in the later sense of rising to eternal life, they do involve the return to life of individuals who are in fact dead.

In the story of Elijah's resuscitation of a dead boy in 1 Kgs 17:17-24, the language seems to suggest that he is in fact dead. Some commentators, however, have suggested that the boy may not

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<sup>408</sup> Johnston (2002: 219-20) critiques this view noting that these resuscitations in 1 and 2 Kgs involved a) physical contact with the prophets, whereas there is no such connection in the songs of Moses and Hannah, b) given a meagre incorporation of these motifs elsewhere in Israel's literature, dependence on the Elijah and Elisha miracles cannot be convincingly demonstrated. Johnston concludes that "these songs extrapolate from the writer's understanding of Yahweh to affirm his power over life and death, rather than testify to known instances of return from the dead".

have been literally dead. Gray (1977: 382) asserts that the text never says he has actually died, but, following Johnson (1950: 86ff), claims that *מוֹת* may signify “a weak form of life”, or a temporary suspension of one’s faculties. Montgomery (1951: 296) also claimed that the boy’s death is “not so specifically stated”. More recently, however, Cogan (2001: 428) calls attention to the loss of the *נְשִׁמָה*, that which “animates all flesh” (cf. Gen. 2:7), and the fact that to lose it marks the end of one’s life (cf. Job 34:14-15). He also criticizes Gray for his quest to find a “factual basis” for the story, stating that Gray, in attributing the loss of the *נְשִׁמָה* to mere breathing difficulties, or the boy’s quarantine in the upper room as a matter of hygiene, has “missed the point of this hagiographic tale”. With that said, if the passage is indeed ambiguous as to whether the boy has actually died or is just ill, the language clearly favours actual death.

Initially, in verse 17, the boy becomes ill (*חָלָה*), but to the extent that ‘*no breath remained in him*’ (*לֹא נִשְׁמָה בּוֹ נִשְׁמָה*). In verses 18 and 20, the boy’s death is expressed with a hiphil infinitive (*לְהַמִּית*), as the protagonists attribute the death either to the prophet’s presence or to God. When he is finally resuscitated, his life, or soul, returns to him in accordance with Elijah’s prayer. It is important to note that the text states literally that the boy’s *נֶפֶשׁ* (LXX: ψυχή) is what returns to him. Furthermore, in 17:22b, the return of the boy’s *נֶפֶשׁ* is expressed via the unusual construct *עַל קִרְבוֹ* ‘*upon his inner self*’, which seems to imply that the *נֶפֶשׁ* has returned to the boy’s body.<sup>409</sup> In direct contrast to *מוֹת*, we read that the boy lived: *וַיְחַי* ‘*And he lived*’. Elijah’s final statement, *רְאֵי הִי בֶּנְךָ* ‘*See, your son lives*’, also suggests that actual death has occurred. Moreover, the mother’s emphatic response in 17:24 not only affirms that Elijah is truly a man of God but also implicitly that God has

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<sup>409</sup> Apart from one more instance in the Passover story at Ex. 12:9, where *עַל קִרְבוֹ* is used to refer to the entrails or inner parts of the lamb, this is the only other instance where *עַל* precedes *קִרְב* in reference to the inside of a body. Perhaps the unique event of a dead person being resuscitated is an appropriate occasion for the unusual idiom. Cf. Lev. 3:3, 9, 14; 4:8; 8:16, 25 for the phrase: *כָּל הַחֵלֶב אֲשֶׁר עַל הַקֶּרֶב* ‘*All the fat that is upon entrails*’.

the power to restore life to the dead.

Again, in the case of Elisha, the language is specific – the son of the Shunammite woman has unambiguously died. In 2 Kgs 4:20, after complaining to his father about an apparent pain in his head, the child is taken to his mother where he sits on her lap until midday, and then dies: וַיָּמָת *‘and he died’*. The factor of time – עַד הַצֹּהָרִים *‘until midday’* – is also important, as it reinforces the distinction between illness and death. The child is already unwell, which lasts until noon. Gray (1977: 496-97) neglects to comment on 4:20. While he seems to confirm that death has occurred, he explains the state of the child as “the intermediate stage between life and death”. He then claims that the woman’s act of leaving the boy in Elisha’s room with the door closed reflects a Near Eastern custom of attempting to keep the נֶפֶשׁ close to the body. This may also reflect the woman’s hopes of averting final death if Elisha is to perform a miracle. Gray (499) also describes the child’s condition of unconsciousness as having been exaggerated to actual death. However, it seems nonsensical to conclude that the language of the passage, as well as the drama of the narrative, indicates anything other than the actual death of the boy. In 4:28, the woman says to Elisha *‘Did I not ask for a son from my lord?’*, implying that the loss is real. In 4:31, Gehazi lays the staff of Elisha on the child’s face, yet there is no sound or response from the boy (וַאִין קוֹל וַאִין קֶשֶׁב). When the boy is revived, his flesh first becomes warm, and then he sneezes seven times indicating that breath has returned to him. Both details seem to be evidence of actual death, and the revival of the boy is intended as a miraculous resuscitation rather than mere healing.

Regarding the brief story in 2 Kgs 13:20-21 of the dead man springing back to life after having contact with Elisha’s bones, there should be no doubt about his state of actual death. Elisha himself has died and been buried, and the corpse of the man soon to be resuscitated is himself undergoing burial before being quickly tossed into Elisha’s tomb and touching the prophet’s bones. The final sentence describing the remarkable event is worth noting, as it closely resembles Ezek. 37:10c and the description of the resurrected nation coming to life and standing upon their feet:

Ezek. 37:10c – על רגליהם ויעמדו *‘And they lived, and they stood upon their feet’*.

2 Kgs 13:21d – על רגליו ויקם *‘And he lived, and he rose upon his feet’*.<sup>410</sup>

These stories are unique in that, while implicitly God is the power behind the miracles, these resuscitation episodes occurred as a result of physical contact with the prophets themselves, and Elisha’s bones. However, like 1 Sam. 2:6 and Deut. 32:39, where death is said to be reversible by way of God’s power, actual death is literally reversed in the above stories of Elijah and Elisha. At this point, it is important to note that these events are resuscitations from death and not resurrections. As we will later see, resurrection is characterized as a qualitatively different life where death no longer follows, as it does for those who have been resuscitated.

Nevertheless, the language here regarding death and life is specific enough that any attempt to downplay the miraculous and dramatic content of these narratives requires a special effort, which seems unnecessary. Furthermore, given the language of life and death, which finds its way into later resurrection texts, the close resemblance between Ezek. 37:10c and 2 Kgs 13:21d, and the implied power of God to bestow new life to the dead, qualifies these events as participants in the resurrection discussion.

### 8.2.3. Hos. 6:1

What is immediately striking about Hos. 6:1-2 is its relationship with Ezek. 37, especially the possibility of reading a comparable metaphor of death for the nation and their restoration to life.

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<sup>410</sup> The interchangeability of עמד and קום may be reflective of late Biblical Hebrew under the influence of Aramaic, where קום is the common lexeme used for both standing and rising (cf. Dan. 12:13). See Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensverd (2008: 41).

Furthermore, we have language reminiscent of Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6.

First, while *נזת* in the hiphil does not appear in this text, the hiphil of *נכה* readily suggests death, as it occasionally refers to striking down in order to kill (cf. for example, Gen. 4:15, 8:21; Jer. 5:6, 21:7; Ps. 78:51, 105:36; Job 1:15, 17). We then have the piel imperfect of *חיה*, as we find in Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6. Some scholars view the language of *חיה* and *קום* as indicators of the presence of a resurrection motif (Hubbard, 1989a: 125). Johnston (2002: 222), however, refutes this for various reasons, including the relationship of ‘*three days*’ (verse 2) with the healing of Hezekiah.<sup>411</sup> That being said, the pairing of *חיה* and *קום* is noteworthy, especially in relation to 2 Kgs 13:21d and Isa. 26:14 and 19. Dearman (2010: 193-94n), however, includes 1 Sam. 2:6 stating that, while the hiphil of *עלה* is used in place of *קום*, it is similarly employed “to express the overcoming of Sheol and the powers of death”. In this case, we can also add Ezek. 37:10c, as noted above.

Between Ezek. 37 and Hosea 6:1-2 there is also a comparable set of ideas. These ideas do not constitute an inter-text, but there are some similarities between the two passages worth noting.

First, in Hos. 6:1-2, we have a) the call to repentance; b) the parallel phrases in 1b and 1c – ‘*He has torn* (*טרה*)... *He will heal* (*רפא*)’, and ‘*He has struck down* (*נכה*)... *He will bind us up* (*חבש*)’; c) the people are revived (*חיה* piel – divine agency); d) the people are raised up (*קום*); and e) they live (*חיה*) before their God.

The prophecy of Hosea in its wider context concerns the destruction and exile of both Ephraim and Judah, where Ezek. 37, and especially verses 15-28, concerns the restoration of the northern and

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<sup>411</sup> So also: Wolff (1974b: 117), Rudolph (1966: 135), Mays (1969: 95), Davies (1992: 161). Here, it is also worth noting Elijah’s resuscitation of the dead boy and his action of stretching himself upon the boy three times before he revives, as well as Jonah’s three-day sojourn in the belly of the great fish before he is vomited onto dry land. It is, of course, difficult to determine whether the number three in these instances is purely coincidental or thematic in relation to the boy’s resuscitation and Jonah’s restoration, but the theme of three days is found elsewhere in the HB with either positive or negative connotations. Cf. for example, Gen. 40:13ff; Ex. 5:3, 8:27, 10:22f; Josh. 1:11, 2:16, 22; 1 Sam. 30:12f; 1 Kgs 12:5; Jon. 1:17, 3:3.

southern kingdoms. In Hos. 5:14, God states that he will be like a lion to Ephraim and Judah, that he will tear and carry off his prey: **אֲשָׁא וְאֶלֶךְ** ‘*And I will go and carry away*’. Macintosh (1997: 212) suggests that the addition of **לָלֶךְ** is “likely here to depict the lion, having made its kill, removing the carcass to his lair”. The first person form of **נָשָׂא**, alongside **לָלֶךְ**, also strongly alludes to exile (cf. 1 Sam. 17:34; Jer. 49:29). It is important to note, however, that Hos. 6:1-3 is a call to repentance with the faint hope of restoration in an otherwise profoundly negative context of judgment against Ephraim and Judah. On the other hand, Ezek. 37 in its entirety involves the return from exile, the reunification of both northern and southern kingdoms, and reconciliation to God, with David as their eternal prince.

While Hos. 6 is a passage concerning judgment on the nation, healing and restoration are also in view. In Hos. 6:1b-c it is proclaimed that though God has torn and struck down, he will heal and bind up. In Ezek. 37:7-8, the healing is more dramatic and detailed – God puts sinews, flesh and skin on the dry bones. The metaphor there describes the healing of the people in their hopelessness and spiritual deadness. In Hos. 6:2b, the people are raised up. In Ezek. 37:10, after it is stated that the people receive the breath of life, they stand up on their feet. In Hos. 6:2c, the people live before their God. In Ezek. 37:14, after the people have received God’s breath or spirit, they live, and they are placed on their own soil. It is then that they know that YHWH has acted on their behalf. In this way, both texts speak of the state of reconciliation to God as a qualitatively new life.

Finally, Hos. 6:1-2 contains the necessary features to function as a resurrection antecedent. In a linguistic sense, this passage more closely resembles the later concept of resurrection than the laconic and direct statements regarding God’s power over life and death in Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6. It is not difficult to see how the content of this passage might have been an influence on later resurrection texts. The fact that it is likely picked up by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:4 in light of the events of the Gospels, should come as no surprise (Dearman, 2010: 195). Though Paul does not directly cite Hos. 6:2, it is highly likely that his awareness of the passage informs 1 Cor. 15:4, and he directly cites Hos. 13:14 in 1 Cor. 15:55. That being said, Tertullian appears to be the first Christian to explicitly cite Hos. 6:2 as

a proof-text for the resurrection of Jesus (Macintosh, 1997: 222-23). As we have seen, there are also close similarities between Hos. 6:1-2 and Ezek. 37 that would naturally lay the groundwork for such connections. Both texts display a similar sequence of details that convey a process of national revival and reconciliation to God, and in relation to resurrection, both passages exhibit some salient features: a) the supreme power of Israel's God both to destroy and to restore life after death, and in the case of Ezek. 37, beyond the realm of possibility, b) the revival of the nation in the language of death and life, and c) the new life as qualitatively different from the old.

### **8.3. Isaiah**

In Isa. 26:19, the language of resurrection features heavily and is perhaps anticipated in Isa. 25:7-8. Though the context here is national revival and restoration, the language and imagery “presupposes a concept of individual resurrection”.<sup>412</sup> The language of Sheol and the underworld may also be present here, which might help to explain how literal resurrection was later read into these passages.

As we will later see, the author of Dan. 12 understands this passage as a reference to a literal resurrection, and that his prophecy is a deliberate adaptation and reinterpretation of the language of the Isaianic passage for the purpose of conveying his belief in an eschatological resurrection of the dead (Elledge, 2017: 68). This then raises the question of how the author of Daniel, and his contemporaries, read earlier prophetic texts. Was predictive prophecy, especially texts with an eschatological focus, seen as only applicable to the time and events described, or could such prophetic texts have multiple applications in different periods for different audiences facing different circumstances?

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<sup>412</sup> Johnston (2002: 225). On this point, Johnston also cites Martin-Achard (1960:137f.), Hasel (1980: 272-76) and Puech (1993:1.71).

### 8.3.1. Isa. 25:7-8

Isa. 25:7-8 describes the destruction of death itself, and for all people. The shroud that is cast over all people and nations (25:7b) will be swallowed up and destroyed by God. The destruction and reversal of death are also clearly universal here, which is indicated by the twin phrases *על כל העמים* ‘over all the peoples’ and *על כל הגוים* ‘over all the nations’.

These verses, along with 26:14 and 20-21, provide additional information that, given its theme of the destruction of death itself, inform our reading of 26:19. In other words, without these additional allusions to death and rising from death, Isa. 26:19 would perhaps seem superfluous and out of place in the context.

Clearly, God’s swallowing up of death recalls the old Canaanite myth of Mot swallowing Baal, but also the eschatological banquet described here (Blenkinsopp, 2000: 358-59). However, as Kim (2013: 30) notes, the reconceptualization of these themes is also clear.

#### Text

(i) *וּבִלְעַ בְּהַר הַזֶּה* ‘and he will swallow up on this mountain’. Though the etymology is uncertain, *בלע* is widely thought to mean swallow or consume. However, there is also the possible meaning of confound or confuse (cf. Isa. 19:3).<sup>413</sup> The theme of swallowing *Mot* is well-known and is clearly part of the mythological provenance behind the text here. The connection of *בלע* with Sheol is also notable (cf. Num. 16:30, 32, 34; Ps. 69:16; Prov. 1:12).<sup>414</sup> Schüpphaus (TDOT, 2: 139) also

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<sup>413</sup> O’Connell (NIDOTTE, 1: 666).

<sup>414</sup> LXX: καταπίνω “to drink down, swallow, swallow up” (BDAG: 524).

notes the punitive aspects of בלע in relation to the intervention and judgement of YHWH in Ex. 15:12, Isa. 19:3, Lam. 2:2, 5, 8, Pss. 21:10 and 55:10.

(ii) פני הלוח הלוח 'the front of the shroud that is woven'.<sup>415</sup> לוח as a covering or shroud is a hapax and is followed here by the participle of the same verb. The noun seems best understood as a death shroud,<sup>416</sup> which is supported by the parallel (with similar repetition of the root) המסכה הנסוכה 'the sheet that is spread'. The LXX speaks of Death's victory instead of the promise of its destruction: κατέπιεν ὁ θάνατος ἰσχύσας 'Death prevailed, he swallowed them up'. Regarding פני, Williamson (1995: 6) discusses some of the proposals for emendation but suggests that פני may refer to the front part of the veil that covers the face in order to make sense of the MT.

(iii) על כל הגוים 'over all the nations'. העמים parallels הגוים, and both indicate the universality of God's destruction of the shroud and sheet. The shroud woven over all the people and every nation is none other than death itself. Isa. 25:7, with the addition of 25:8a, appears to assert that the reality of death for all humanity will be consumed and destroyed by God. It is not difficult to see how the author of Daniel might have been aware of this section preceding the material in Isa. 26:19 and then interpreted this as indicating a literal resurrection of the dead.

In his discussion of "Sir Death" and the personification of death in Ugaritic literature and the HB, Tromp (1969: 107) translates 25:8a as a personification of Mot: "Yahweh engorged Mot forever". While Tromp understands YHWH as the subject of בלע, this translation suggests a causative form of the verb, as if to say that YHWH has fed Mot. Notably, this is the only instance in Isaiah where מוה is given the definite article.<sup>417</sup> Taking this as a personification of death, therefore, is problematic. In this instance, המוה is parallel with הלוח and המסכה. Both refer to death as the common fate of all. המוה

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<sup>415</sup> 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>: פנו.

<sup>416</sup> Domeris (NIDOTTE, 2: 771).

<sup>417</sup> Note also that הגוים and העמים are definite.

in 25:8a then agrees with both in bearing the definite article, but *is* the actual shroud and sheet cast over and covering all peoples and nations. While 25:8a is textually problematic, it is clear in the MT that בלע is pointed as a masculine third person piel perfect with death as the object of the verb. Furthermore, God is the subject of בלע, which is made clear from the context. The most straightforward reading then, according to the MT, is: ‘*He swallowed up the death forever*’.<sup>418</sup>

Clements (1980: 209) states that the veil (הלוט) that is destroyed by God in 7b, rather than being a veil of blindness, is a veil signifying mourning. The implication, according to Clements, is that suffering and grief necessitating the veil of mourning will be taken away. He states that one should bear in mind the unique sufferings experienced by Israel in the Babylonian conquest of Judah. In this way, 25:8a must be a later gloss, where the redactor has departed from the original meaning of the passage and taken the removal of suffering and mourning to mean the removal of death itself. Even if this is so, the universality of 25:7b and c – ‘*over all peoples*’ and ‘*over all nations*’ – if difficult to ignore.

Blenkinsopp (2000: 359) highlights the riskiness of assuming that elements such as 25:8a, which may indicate a belief in a meaningful afterlife, must be later additions on the grounds that such beliefs only emerged in the late biblical and post-biblical periods and were not clearly articulated in the Bible. Can we claim that such ideas were unknown? Blenkinsopp further comments on 25:8a stating that the wording recalls the well-known Canaanite myth of Mot, which itself, as the undertow, “pulls the meaning of the phrase in the direction of death”. Death, in this instance, is “something more than a punctual event”.

According to Kaiser (1980: 199n) 25:8a is a later interpolation. Kaiser states that this addition “interrupts the direct continuity of thought”, but in his comment (201), he affirms the interpretation of

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<sup>418</sup> Tromp concludes this section of his thesis by stating that “the personification of death is less frequent in the OT than in Ugaritic”, and that, given the personification of the abode of death in the OT, this “might suggest that Death himself was after all felt to be less personal by the Israelites”.

the redactor as a correct understanding of the preceding verses; that is, the redactor adds 25:8a to show that God must abolish death itself in order for mourning and suffering to end. The NRSV adds 25:8a to verse 7 and Johnston (2002: 224n) notes that the NRSV is in error here. Structurally, however, there may be a rationale for viewing 25:8a as belonging to verse 7 in an A<sup>1</sup>-B<sup>1</sup>-B<sup>2</sup>-A<sup>2</sup> arrangement:

A<sup>1</sup> – וּבִלְעַת בַּהָר הַזֶּה ‘*And he will swallow up on this mountain*’

B<sup>1</sup> – ‘*the shroud that is cast over all the peoples*’

B<sup>2</sup> – ‘*The veil that is spread over all the nations*’

A<sup>2</sup> – בִּלְעַת הַמּוֹת לְנֶצַח ‘*He has swallowed up death forever*’

The question of whether 25:8a is part of the original text or not is difficult to determine, but even if it is a later redactor’s addition, it is at least a clever one. 25:8a interprets and complements the preceding material. The piel of בִּלְעַת, as well as the definite article attached to מוֹת, make 25:8a something of a catchphrase, which guides the reader’s interpretation. Is the interpretation that views death as the object swallowed up inaccurate or erroneous? The initial swallowing phrase at 25:7a already alludes to death, and perhaps also the Canaanite myth of Mot and Baal,<sup>419</sup> as Wildberger points out in his discussion of בִּלְעַת (1997: 532).

Wildberger (1997: 528-29) also argues in favour of 25:8a belonging to the original text. He cites Ezek. 37 to say that the concept of returning from death, even if the Ezekielian passage is not intended as literal, was already known in Israel. He further cites Ps. 22:27-31, and especially verse 30, as a passage that supports the originality of 25:8a.

Wildberger (532-33) discusses the use of בִּלְעַת in relation to death as one of its primary uses and cites Ex. 15:12, Num. 16:32, 34, 26:10, Deut. 11:6, Pss. 69:16,<sup>420</sup> 106:17, and Jer. 51:34 as examples

<sup>419</sup> See KTU 1.5.i.33-35, 1.6.ii.22f.

<sup>420</sup> A printing error in Wildberger’s commentary has the reference printed as Ps. 96:16.

where בלע is used when “human beings find themselves in the realm of the powers of death”. Wildberger goes on to say that מוֹת in Hebrew does not have the same range of meaning as *death* in English and that מוֹת can be anything that diminishes human life, including sickness and mourning. Wildberger states that the passage does not speak directly about resurrection but of the enthronement of YHWH wherein there will no longer be any limitations on what his power may achieve. The opposing power of מוֹת will be swallowed up and destroyed. The repurposing of the Canaanite myth is, therefore, an appropriate device for conveying YHWH’s victory.

### 8.3.2. Isa. 26:19

There can be little doubt that Isa. 26:19 utilizes both the language and notion of the revivification of the dead to convey its message. Equally doubtless is the existing parallel between Isa. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2. As we will see, both texts are sufficiently homogenous linguistically that Dan. 12:1-3 might reasonably be construed as individualizing exegesis of Isa. 26:19. Furthermore, the greater context of both verses supports an understanding that, even though the Isaiah passage is likely a metaphor for national restoration, the concept of resurrection of the dead was undoubtedly known. As Johnston (2002: 225) notes: “The application may be national, but the imagery presupposes a concept of individual resurrection”.

The text of Isa. 26:19 is difficult and appears to contradict earlier statements made in its immediate context.<sup>421</sup> This will be discussed in more detail below. The initial statement in 19a, however, seems unambiguous: יחינו מוֹתֵיךְ ‘*Your dead shall live*’. The LXX is perhaps more universal in its scope and refers to the dead collectively: ἀναστήσονται οἱ νεκροί ‘*The dead will rise*’. This may attest to a more developed notion of the resurrection at the time of its translation, where it was

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<sup>421</sup> Johnston (2002: 112).

perhaps taken more as a literal reference. 19a is then followed by the problematic phrase, נבלתי יקומו, ‘my corpse, they shall rise’. According to the pointing in the MT, the literal translation of 19a-b reads: ‘Your dead shall live, my corpse, they shall rise’. This reading implies the speaker’s identification with YHWH’s people.<sup>422</sup> Different emendations, however, have been proposed for the difficulty arising from the singular suffix on נבלתי ‘my corpse’, where it is usually construed as a collective along with יקומו.<sup>423</sup> The LXX translates in the future: ‘the dead will rise, and those in the tombs shall be roused’.<sup>424</sup> Schmitz (2003: 146) suggests that the LXX’s οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις ‘and those in the tombs’ is possibly a Christian interpolation from John 5:28. However, for the LXX translators, a more advanced belief in a future resurrection may well have informed the paraphrase. On this point, Blenkinsopp (2000: 370) notes that the text here has suffered in transmission stating that such is “the fate of passages deemed to be religiously controversial”. He also points out that the LXX and 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> have changed the imperatives to the future tense (MT: הקיצו ורננו; 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>: יקיצו וירננו) thus affirming their belief in the resurrection of the dead. In this light, the additional Greek phrase need not be construed as a Christian interpolation.

For the following phrase, we find the first lexical point of connection with Dan. 12:2 with the waking verb קיץ. As we will see, in light of Dan. 12:2, קיץ is a term sometimes used for the dead

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<sup>422</sup> Johnston (2002: 112, n. 83). Wildberger (1997: 556) also notes the difficulty with the first singular suffix and suggests that it is a gloss added by a reader who wanted to include himself in the hope of the resurrection. This may be so, but it is difficult to know for certain.

<sup>423</sup> Most standard English versions follow the Vulgate or Syriac (Schmitz, 2003: 146). So, for example, ESV and RSV: “their bodies shall rise”; NRSV: “their corpses shall rise”; NIV: “their bodies will rise”. However, NKJV/KJV attempt to make sense of the MT: “together with my dead body”. Gesenius suggests that the fem singular נבלה is to be understood as a collective in the feminine form, yet construed as a masculine “heap of dead bodies” (GK §122s). Childs (2001: 188n.g) notes the possible influence of Ps. 49:16.

<sup>424</sup> My translation. NETS: ‘The dead shall rise, and those who are in the tombs shall be raised’. The LXX appears to conflate 19a-c by reiterating the future expectation of the dead rising. In place of the imperative הקיצו in the MT, ἐγείρω is used as an indicative future (ἐγερθήσονται). Moreover, ἐγείρω is best understood as a verb relating to rousing or waking (see BDAG: 271) and is clearly used for קיץ in the LXX. On the other hand, in Dan. 12:2 the LXX omits קיץ and simply states that those who sleep in the ‘earth of dust’ will rise (ἀνίστημι).

waking up. Here, the author of Dan. 12 has clearly understood the exhortation **הקיצו ורננו** in Isa. 26:19 directed at those who sleep in the dust, in terms of the dead rising.<sup>425</sup> Again, the LXX renders this phrase as a predictive statement: *καὶ εὐφρανθήσονται οἱ ἐν τῇ γῆ* ‘and they will wake up, those who are in the earth’.

The next point on contact with Dan. 12:2 is the phrase, **שכני עפר** ‘*dwellers in the dust*’. This phrase clearly refers to the dead and also potentially alludes to the underworld. Importantly, the connection of **עפר** to death and the grave, and of course, resurrection and waking (**קיצו**) from death, is later reutilized in Dan. 12:2 (see analysis at 8.4.2. (iii) below). Between Isa. 26:19b and Dan. 12:2 we have comparable phrases:

**מישני ארמת-עפר יקיצו**

*‘from those who sleep in the earth of dust, they will awake’*

**הקיצו ורננו שכני עפר**

*‘Awake, and rejoice you who dwell in the dust!’*

In the narrative descriptions of the deaths of Israel’s kings, sleep is frequently equated with death throughout 1 and 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles with the use of the verb **שכב** “lie down”, followed closely or directly by **עם-אבתיו** “with his fathers”.<sup>426</sup> Daniel’s sleeping verb, **ישן**, is also used for the sleep of death at Ps. 13:3: **האירה עיני פן-אישן המות**.

Next, we have the phrase **כי טל אורת טלך** ‘*for a dew of light/s is your dew*’.<sup>427</sup> Day (1978:

<sup>425</sup> See the discussion of resurrection terminology by Sawyer (1973: 218-234).

<sup>426</sup> BDB: 1011. Cf. for example, 1 Kgs 1:21, 2:10, 11:21; 2 Kgs 8:24, 10:35, 13:9; 2 Chron. 9:31, 12:16, 14:1. For a more detailed discussion of this phrase, see Johnston (2002: 34f).

<sup>427</sup> Hays (2013<sup>i</sup>: 8) briefly discusses the possible Aramaized form of **טל** in 26:19 being cognate with Hebrew **טל**, but points out that the Aramaic spelling with the **ט** is attested in the pre-exilic period in the name **חמוטל** “my father-in-law is protection” or “my husband’s father is the dew” (BDB: 327) in 2 Kgs 23:31, and the other form of **חמיטל** in 2 Kgs 24:18 (Hays mistakenly cites 2 Kgs 24:48) and Jer. 52:1. However, in Isa. 26:19, **טל** is the noun for “dew” and not the Aramaic verb **טלל** “cover over” (BDB: 378), which itself is only

267) maintains that טל אורת is best understood as “dew of light” alluding to the dawn (cf. Judg. 19:26 and Neh. 8:3). He supports this view citing Hos. 6:2-3 and 14:6 for their allusion to the resurrection of Israel, along with Ps. 110:3 for its mention of the dawn in relation to the rebirth of the king in the phrase מרחם משהר ‘from the womb of the dawn’, as well as its use of טל in the phrase טל ילדתיך ‘the dew of your youth’. The phrase ‘dwellers in the dust’ and ‘your dew’ of course refer to the dead, being the same object of the imperatives רננו and הקיצו. As Day has shown in his astute observation of the eight parallels between Isa. 26:13 to 27:11 and Hos. 13:4 to 14:10,<sup>428</sup> this phrase is part of an interpretation of Hos. 13:14 and 14:6, and thus טל אורת may refer to God himself, as in Hosea 14:6 God determines to *be* like the dew for Israel in the phrase אהיה כטל לישראל ‘I will be like the dew for Israel’.

The final phrase (19d) with its mention of the earth giving birth to, or casting forth the dead/Rephaim (וארץ רפאים תפיל) is perhaps the most crucial, but it is also very difficult to interpret.

First, the Rephaim are often associated with the underworld (cf. Job 26:5-6; Isa. 14:9; Ps. 88:3, 11; Prov. 2:18, 9:18, 21:16).<sup>429</sup> However, the name also refers to ancient Canaanites, the Valley of the Rephaim near Jerusalem and possibly Philistine ancestors, but they are not Israelite ancestors.<sup>430</sup> Notably, in 26:14 we have the reference to the Rephaim and their annihilation without the possibility of resurrection. The parallel phrases stating that the dead will not live (מתים בל יחיו) and that the Rephaim will not rise (רפאים בל יקמו) clearly link up thematically with מתיך ‘your dead’, יקמון ‘they will rise’ and רפאים in verse 19. However, the distinction between the Rephaim who wake up

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attested as a loan word in Neh. 3:15. Moreover, as Isa. 26:19 stands an interpretation of Hos. 13:14 and 14:6, the intended meaning is “dew”.

<sup>428</sup> See Day (1980: 309-19).

<sup>429</sup> Prov. 2:18 is an important example due to its strong allusion to the underworld. The LXX also appears to understand 2:18 as a reference to the underworld, inserting Hades where Sheol is absent from the MT. The Rephaim are rendered in the LXX as γηγενῶν “earth-born”: καὶ παρὰ τῷ ἄδῃ μετὰ τῶν γηγενῶν τοὺς ἄξονας ἀντῆς.

<sup>430</sup> Johnston (2002: 128); Suriano (2018: 30-31).

and live and those who do not is problematic. Clearly, in verse 14 the Rephaim there are cast in a negative light. These are perhaps the vanquished dead of the ethnic Rephaim and ancient inhabitants of the Transjordan (cf. Gen. 14:5, 15:20; Deut. 2:11, 2:20, 3:11, 13; Josh. 12:4, 13:12; 1 Chron. 20:6-8). The identity of the Rephaim in verse 19 is more difficult.<sup>431</sup> Regarding verse 14, Clements (1980: 215) argues that, though other commentators have questioned the originality of this verse, it makes sense as a comment on the “other lords” in the preceding verse. Clements translates רפאים and נזתים adjectivally as a description of the ארזנים: “they are dead”, and “they are shades”. It is also possible that a deliberate contrast with what is to follow later in verse 19 is introduced here. Kaiser (1980: 212) suggests that these phrases in 26:14a-b function as reminders of the finality of death, but also as an occasion for YHWH’s intervention on behalf of the righteous (cf. Pss. 6:6, 88:12-13, 30:10; Isa. 38:18). In any case, both occurrences of רפאים in verses 14 and 19 refer to the dead.

Second, the sense of נפל as bringing something to life or giving birth, as it is interpreted by many scholars, is unique to Isa. 26:18-19. However, as Johnston (2002: 113) notes, there is little evidence in support of this meaning. The rationale behind this interpretation likely comes from the related noun of the same root which means ‘stillborn child, miscarriage’, along with the preceding childbirth imagery in 18a. However, as Johnston explains, in prophetic and apocalyptic literature different images are often juxtaposed, and for this reason, the childbirth imagery does not necessitate such a unique use of this verb. The LXX, on the other hand, reads in the normal sense of falling and appears to view the רפאים as the “irreverent, impious, ungodly”:<sup>432</sup> ἡ δὲ γῆ τῶν ἀσεβῶν πεσεῖται ‘*but the land of the ungodly will fall*’. This rendering may find support in the context at 26:21a and

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<sup>431</sup> While I am aware of the significance of the Rephaim in relation to a study of Sheol, space does not permit a detailed analysis of this term here. For a comprehensive study on the Rephaim, see Johnston (1993: 94-110; 2002: 128-42). Johnston discusses the various biblical types of Rephaim: the dead Rephaim, the ethnic Rephaim, possible Philistine connections, as well as the Ugaritic *rpum* and other Semitic occurrences of the term.

<sup>432</sup> BDAG: 141.

God's punishment of iniquity. However, the normal translation of the earth casting out the dead, as in the AV/KJV, likewise finds support in 26:21b where the earth discloses the blood that was shed upon it. This may also allude to Israelite martyrs. The AV/KJV's rendering may also reflect the hiphil examples of נפל with the meaning of casting lots (cf. 1 Chron. 24:31, 25:8, 26:13, 14; Est. 3:7, 9:24; Neh. 10:35, 11:1; Ps. 22:19; Jon. 1:7). In this way, the רפאים are perhaps being "cast forth" for judgment in the same way that *lots* (גורל) are cast for letting God, or fate, make a decision. Of the different interpretations of the final phrase in verse 19 discussed by Johnston (2002: 112-14), he concludes that the phrase probably means: "the earth will let go of the shades". This is the most sensible translation in terms of the natural sense of each word. Furthermore, it fits the context and does not require any interpretive leaps.

Concerning ארץ, Tromp (1969: 29) states that it clearly "stands for the abode of the dead". However, to say that ארץ properly denotes the underworld here is an unnecessary amplification of its basic meaning. Rather, the earth, as commonly understood, is where the dead are of course buried. As Johnston (2002: 114) notes, other associated terms, such as corpses, dust and dew, naturally fit with ארץ as 'earth' and therefore ארץ here refers to an earthy grave without the necessity of taking on any otherworldly aspects. Importantly, the spiritualizing elements are the Rephaim and the dwellers in the dust waking up from death, but again, this does not require an underworld interpretation for ארץ.

In his commentary on Ps. 36:10, Dahood (1966: 222-23) proffers a highly dubious reading of 26:19c: "for your dew is the dew of the fields, but the land of the Shades will be parched". Dahood construes טל אורת as "dew of the fields", which he understands as signifying the Greek Elysian Fields in contrast with "land of the shades" (ארץ רפאים), implicitly Sheol, or Hades. He then replaces the

hiphil of נפל (תפיל) with נבל “sink or drop down, languish, wither and fall, fade”,<sup>433</sup> which arguably fits with נבלתי in 19a. However, this is not supported by the versions, and נבל is not attested in hiphil.<sup>434</sup>

Finally, verses 26:20-21 may continue the theme of resurrection for God’s people. First, in 26:20a God tells his people to enter their chambers (בא בהרריך). Here, the noun חדר ‘chamber’ may function as a synonym for Sheol and the grave (cf. Prov. 7:27 and the חררי מות ‘chambers of death’). They are then told to shut their doors behind them (וסגר דלתריך בערך).<sup>435</sup> In this way, it might be said that the people are figuratively told to enter their graves for a time until God’s wrath has passed (cf. Job 14:13). God’s wrath and judgment are presumably for the living, or those dwelling on the earth (ישב הארץ), as opposed to the dead.

Childs (2001: 192) sees these final verses as a prophetic encouragement, and that the imagery alludes to the Noachic covenant. As a reversal of the people entering their chambers, hiding and shutting their doors behind them in 26:20, in 26:21c the earth discloses the blood shed upon it, and no longer conceals its slain or murder victims. Justice for martyrs and those who have lost their lives unjustly and before their time is a feature of Daniel’s eschatological vision of the resurrection. 26:21 clearly alludes to something similar. Oswalt (1986: 488) makes note of the plural of “blood” here and translates as “the earth will uncover her bloodshed” (cf. Ps. 51:16; Isa. 33:15; Ezek. 9:9; Hos. 4:2; Nah. 3:1; Hab. 2:8, 12, 17). הרוגיה parallels רמיה in 21d, and both the plural noun and passive participle denote murder victims. Additionally, each may allude to the murder of Abel in Gen. 4:8.

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<sup>433</sup> BDB: 615. On similar uses of נבל cf. Isa. 64:5; Jer. 8:13; Ps. 1:3. Dahood (1963: 24) discusses the possibility of the imperfect יפל in Prov. 11:28 as a dialectical form of יבל which is the proposed emendation, and in his commentary on Ps. 36:10 suggests the same emendation for Isa. 26:19.

<sup>434</sup> LXX: ἡ δὲ γῆ τῶν ἀσεβῶν πεσεῖται ‘the land of the ungodly shall fall’; Vulgate: tuus et terram gigantum detrahes in ruinam ‘and the land of the giants you will pull down into ruin’. In the Targum the wicked are handed over to Gehenna: ורשיעיא די יהבתא להון גבורא ואנון עברו על מימריך לגיהנם תמוסר ‘and the wicked to whom you have given power, and they who transgressed against your word, you will hand over to Gehenna’;

<sup>435</sup> Cf. Job 38:10.

There, Cain slays (הרג) his brother Abel, and the voice of Abel's blood(s) cries out to God from the ground (קול דמי אהיך).

Isa. 26:19 and its immediate context is complex. As Day has famously observed, the passage has clear connections to Hos. 13:4 to 14:10, and Dan. 12:2, as we will see shortly. The metaphorical purpose of the resurrection imagery notwithstanding, Isa. 26:19 displays a highly developed concept of resurrection of the dead, which is firmly grounded in a Hebraic worldview, and one that plays a vital role in the development of belief in the resurrection.

#### 8.4. Daniel 12:1-3

In Dan. 12:2 we read that at the end of history, in a time of unprecedented suffering, the people of God will be delivered, and many who have died during the time of the Antiochene persecution are depicted as waking from the sleep of death, *'some to everlasting life and some to reproaches - to everlasting abhorrence'*. Given the language of *'everlasting life'* and *'everlasting abhorrence'*, it is widely accepted that Dan. 12:2 refers to the actual resurrection of dead individuals, and that this passage is the only clear attestation of the belief in literal resurrection in the HB.<sup>436</sup> Moreover, in the field of Biblical Studies, resurrection is generally considered to be a much later development within Second Temple Judaism,<sup>437</sup> and this together with its singular occurrence as a literal reference in Dan. 12 has led to the view that the biblical model of resurrection is a foreign doctrinal import providing a solution to the martyrdom of pious Jews under the persecution of Antiochus IV.<sup>438</sup> The most widely discussed possibility is that Jewish resurrection is of Persian or Zoroastrian origin, an idea originally suggested by the German School of Religious History (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) in the nineteenth

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<sup>436</sup> So Lacocque (1976: 243); Collins, (1993: 394); Wright (2003: 109n); Levenson (2006: 181).

<sup>437</sup> Goldingay (1989: 306).

<sup>438</sup> As noted by Johnston (2002: 226).

century.<sup>439</sup> Other suggestions for external influences on Jewish resurrection focus on Ugarit and Israel's Canaanite neighbours but also Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece.<sup>440</sup> However, the context of Dan. 12:1-3 in which the belief appears is uniquely coloured by its biblical heritage linguistically, and a closer examination of the text reveals that the author depends heavily on the wider prophetic corpus, especially Isaiah. Furthermore, the text addresses a unique period in Jewish history with uniquely Jewish concerns. In this way, it seems inevitable that the resurrection in Dan. 12:2 will naturally gravitate to a particular cultural rendering. On this point Levenson (2006: 185) comments: "much is lost when the resurrection of the dead is treated as a free-floating concept whose essence remains constant no matter what the culture in which it appears or to which it migrates. For every item in a religious tradition stands in a systemic relation to every other and cannot be detached and examined without grave damage to its organic function."

#### **8.4.1. Dan. 12:1**

*Then at that time, Michael will arise, the great commander who stands over the sons of your people, and there will be a time of distress such that has never been from the founding of a nation until that time. But at that time, your people will escape - everyone who is found written in the book.*

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<sup>439</sup> Bremmer (2002: 47); Madigan and Levenson (2008: 199).

<sup>440</sup> See Johnston (2002: 233-39). Johnston provides a helpful overview of the afterlife beliefs of various cultures neighbouring ancient Israel, namely Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ugarit, Persia and Greece. He concludes that while a developed notion of an afterlife was present in many of these cultures, resurrection belief is not found in Egypt, Mesopotamia or Greece. On the dying-and-rising god traditions in Ugaritic and Canaanite cultures, Johnston notes that Israel's prophets may have known of these traditions but that such annual cyclic concepts "contributed only tangentially, if at all" to the biblical hope and proclamations of national restoration. Similarly, regarding Zoroastrian eschatology, Johnston underscores many of the significant differences between Jewish and Zoroastrian resurrection. He concludes that while Persian religion may have contributed in some way to resurrection faith in Israel, the main differences nevertheless mark biblical and Jewish resurrection as culturally distinct. This will be discussed in further detail below.

(i) **וּבַעַת הַהִיא** ‘*Then at that time*’. This phrase is very common in the HB. There are three occurrences in verse 1 with a prepositional variation in the second occurrence (**עַד הַעַת הַהִיא**). It refers to the time of the end (**וּבַעַת קֵץ**) introduced at Dan. 11:40,<sup>441</sup> and can be found in other eschatological passages such as Jer. 3:17 and 4:11. It is comparable to the phrase **בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא** ‘*on that day*’, which Collins (1993: 390) designates as an “eschatological marker in post-exilic prophecy”.<sup>442</sup>

The significance of this phrase in 12:1 is that it indicates a time wherein the resurrection of the dead in 12:2 takes place. Furthermore, the link with 11:40 is distinct in the LXX. There, the LXX translates **וּבַעַת קֵץ** as *καὶ καθ’ ὥραν συντελείας* ‘*and according to the hour of consummation*’. Similarly, for the first occurrence of **בַּעַת הַהִיא** in 12:1, we have *καὶ κατὰ τὴν ὥραν ἐκείνην* ‘*And at that hour*’. This is the only instance in the HB where **בַּעַת הַהִיא** is translated in the LXX with the use of *ὥραν* ‘*hour*’.<sup>443</sup>

(ii) **יַעֲמֹד** ‘*he will arise*’. The verb **עָמַד** has a wide range of meanings relating to standing and rising. It occurs in Dan. 12 four times, yet the meaning of this first occurrence is disputed.<sup>444</sup> The LXX has *παρελεύσεται* ‘*he will pass by*’ for this occurrence, whereas for the second occurrence in 12:1 and the following occurrence in 12:5, the LXX makes use of the verb *ἵστημι* (12:1b - *ὁ ἐστήκως*

<sup>441</sup> Goldingay (1989: 305) notes a shift in the material at 11:40 from quasi-prophetic writing to that of predictive prophecy; Charles (1929: 325) also sees 11:40-45 and 12:1-3 as forming a unity.

<sup>442</sup> Cf. Isa. 4:2, 5:30, 7:21 and Am. 9:11. See HALOT: 401. For a comprehensive discussion of **הַיּוֹם הַהוּא**, see DeVries (1975: 281-331).

<sup>443</sup> *καρπῷ ἐκείνῳ* ‘*that time/season*’ (dative) is the most common LXX translation for **בַּעַת הַהִיא** (cf. Gen. 21:22, 38:1; Num. 22:4 (accusative); Deut. 1:9, 16, 18, 2:34, 3:4, 8, 12, 18, 21, 23, 4:14, 5:5, 9:20, 10:1, 8; Judg. 3:29, 4:4, 12:6, 14:4, 21:14, 24; 2 Kgs 16:6, 18:16, 20:12, 24:10; 1 Chron. 21:28; 2 Chron. 7:8, 16:7, 21:10, 28:16, 35:17; Neh. 4:16; Isa. 18:7, 39:1; Jer. 3:17, 4:11, 8:1, 50:20 (LXX 27:20); Mic. 3:4; Zeph. 3:19-20). The LXX version of Josh. 5:2 reads *ὑπὸ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν* ‘*Now at that time*’ for **בַּעַת הַהִיא**. The other common LXX translation, with grammatical variation, is *ἡμέρῳ ἐκείνῃ* ‘*that day/period/time*’ (cf. 1 Kgs 8:65; 2 Chron. 13:18; Jer. 3:17; Joel 31:1 (LXX 4:1); Zeph. 1:12). This is also used in the LXX for the comparable phrase **בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא** (cf. 1 Sam. 3:2, 14:18; 1 Kgs 8:65; 2 Kgs 3:6; Isa. 4:2, 5:30, 7:21; Am. 9:11). In Jer. 31:1 (LXX 38:1), *χρόνῳ ἐκείνῳ* ‘*that time*’ is used for **בַּעַת הַהִיא**.

<sup>444</sup> Collins (1993: 390).

ἐπὶ ‘*the one who stands over*’; 12:5 - δύο ἕτεροι εἰστήκεισαν ‘*two others stood*’).<sup>445</sup> Whether this reflects the translator’s own difficulty with the first occurrence or a different *Vorlage*, is of course very difficult to determine. However, in the MT, this first occurrence of עמד may take on the basic meaning of ‘*arise*’, reflecting the late Biblical Hebrew use of the verb under the influence of Aramaic, where קום is the common lexeme used for both standing and rising.<sup>446</sup>

The final occurrence of עמד in 12:13 is used of Daniel himself, where he is told that he will rest (ותנוח) and then stand (ותעמד) to his allotted place at the end of days (לקץ הימים). The reference to the end again recalls the time of the end (רבעת קץ) in 11:40 and renders Daniel’s resting and standing to his lot as analogous to resurrection.<sup>447</sup> Here, the LXX uses ανιστημι ‘*to raise up bringing back to life*’<sup>448</sup> for עמד, which is clearly understood as referring to resurrection in 2 Macc. 7:9, as well as various passages in the New Testament describing Jesus’ resurrection. Furthermore, the verb נוח, used to describe Daniel’s rest, refers to the sleep of death in a number of biblical passages (cf. Isa. 57:2; Job 3:13, 17; 17:16 and Prov. 21:16). In this way, the use of נוח in 12:13 picks up the motif of the dead waking from their deathly sleep in verse 2, and may, therefore, qualify עמד as a resurrection term.

Theologically, standing in the presence of God is a motif that may also be associated with עמד, which may be applied to individuals (cf. Gen. 18:22, 19:27; Deut. 10:8, 10), or a collective in a corporate worship context (cf. Deut. 4:10; 2 Chron. 20:13).<sup>449</sup> Furthermore, עמד can sometimes be used in the context of judicial proceedings where one stands before a judge (cf. Ex. 18:13; Deut. 19:17; Josh. 20:6).<sup>450</sup>

<sup>445</sup> ἵστημι has a very wide range of meanings, including ‘*stand*’ and ‘*stand up*’. See BDAG: 482.

<sup>446</sup> Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensverd (2008: 41).

<sup>447</sup> Goldingay (1989: 310).

<sup>448</sup> BDAG: 83.

<sup>449</sup> Martens (NIDOTTE, 3: 432).

<sup>450</sup> TDOT (11: 241).

Nickelsburg has argued for a meaning that fits a judicial understanding of the context in 12:1. In this instance, the archangel Michael stands in defence of Israel. However, not in a military sense, as in Dan. 10:13, 21, but with the same judicial function ascribed to the angel of YHWH in Zech. 1:8-12.<sup>451</sup> In this way, the use of עֹמֵד in Michael's standing up in defence of Israel points to the period of judgment, which becomes especially clear with the following resurrection and judgment of the dead in verse 2, where the dead wake either to 'everlasting life' or 'everlasting shame and abhorrence'.

(iii) מִיכָאֵל הַשָּׂר הַגָּדוֹל 'Michael the great prince'. Michael is identified as the patron angel of Israel.<sup>452</sup> The ordinary name מִיכָאֵל 'Who is like El/God?' occurs in various places in the HB (cf. Num. 13:13; 1 Chron. 5:13; Ezra 8:8).<sup>453</sup> However, only in Daniel (10:13, 10:21, and 12:1) does this name refer to the archangel Michael. The angelic figure of Michael features prominently in other apocalyptic literature, and in 1 Enoch 9:1, 20:5 and 71:9 he is one of the senior angels.<sup>454</sup> According to Nickelsburg (2006: 27), the title שָׂר indicates that, in this end times context, Michael's role is of a military nature, as well as judicial.<sup>455</sup>

(iv) הָעֹמֵד עַל־בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ 'the one who stands over the sons of your people'. Here, עֹמֵד followed by the preposition עַל is used to describe Michael's protective role over the people as the guardian of Israel or perhaps the one who stands in defence of Israel in keeping with the judicial understanding of עֹמֵד, as discussed above.

Another possible connection with this use of עֹמֵד in defence of the nation is Esth. 4:14. Here, Esther is faced with the choice of pleading with the king on behalf of the Jews or remaining silent,

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<sup>451</sup> Nickelsburg (2006: 24).

<sup>452</sup> Collins (1998: 103).

<sup>453</sup> HALOT: 576.

<sup>454</sup> Goldingay (1989: 292).

<sup>455</sup> The military use of שָׂר is well attested. See BDB: 978. Nickelsburg notes, in particular, the title שָׂר־הַצְּבָא in Dan. 8:11, which may or may not refer to Michael.

which would result in their destruction according to the decree issued in the city of Susa. Mordecai then warns her that she and her family are no more protected than the rest of the Jews and says:

*For if you surely keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise (יַעֲמֹד) for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows if for such a time as this you have come to the kingdom?*

Despite arguments in favour of a negative reading of 14a, that deliverance will *not* arise for the Jews from **מִקוֹם אֲחֵר** ‘another place’ (perhaps a substitute phrase for God<sup>456</sup>), the use of **יַעֲמֹד** here is notable in relation to the defence of the people. The positive reading may indicate that if Esther remains silent, even though her family will perish as a result, the ultimate deliverance of the Jews is a given. In this way, perhaps Mordecai’s words envisage a deliverance and justice for the nation in the same eschatological spirit as Dan. 12:1-3.

(v) **וְהָיְתָה עַתַּת צָרָה** ‘and there will be a time of distress’. Concerning the salvation and restoration of Israel in a ‘time of distress’, **עַתַּת צָרָה** is one of four elements in the verse that allude to Jer. 30:7.<sup>457</sup> First, **עַתַּת צָרָה** occurs only seven times in the HB, including Dan. 12:1.<sup>458</sup> However, only Dan. 12:1 and Jer. 30:7 appear to be strictly eschatological, with Dan. 12:1 referring to an unprecedented time of distress in the end time, and Jer. 30:7 the dreaded ‘day of the YHWH’ (cf. Isa. 13:6; Joel 1:15; 2:1-2; Am. 5:18; Zeph. 1:14). Second, **בְּיוֹם הַהוּא**, the “eschatological marker in post-exilic prophecy” noted by Collins, also occurs in Jer. 30:7, minus the **בְּ** preposition. According to Pedersen (1926: 332), **צָרָה** is best understood as the opposite of salvation and deliverance, where he notes that those in distress, in the sense of **צָרָה** specifically, often cry out for salvation. And this rule would seem to apply in six

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<sup>456</sup> See the discussion by Bush (1996: 395-96).

<sup>457</sup> Levenson (2006: 183).

<sup>458</sup> Collins (1993: 391). Cf. Judg. 10:14; Ps. 37:39; Isa. 33:2; Jer. 14:8, 15:11, 30:7; Dan. 12:1.

of the seven passages containing the expression עַתְּ צָרָה. In five of these passages (Judg. 10:14, Ps. 37:39, Isa. 33:2, Jer. 14:8, and 30:7) the deliverance verb is יִשַׁע, whereas, in Dan. 12:1 the deliverance verb is the niph'al imperfect of מָלַט 'slip away, escape'.<sup>459</sup> Jer. 15:11, however, is the only passage containing עַתְּ צָרָה where salvation or deliverance for the nation does not appear.

(vi) אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִהְיְתָה מִהַיּוֹת גּוֹי עַד הַעַתְּ הַזֵּה הָיָא 'such that has never been from the founding of a nation until that time'. This clause is the third element reflecting the author's reading of Jer. 30:7. There, we have the phrase מֵאִיִּן כְּמֹהוּ 'from nothing like it' describing the 'Day of YHWH'. Collins (1993: 391) notes the similarity of this line to Exodus 9:24: 'the hail was very oppressive, the like of which had never been in all the land of Egypt from the time it became a nation.' In other words, this turbulent time in the history of Israel will be unprecedented, which further underscores the eschatological meaning of וּבַעַתְּ הָיָא.

(vii) וּבַעַתְּ הָיָא יִמְלֹט עַמְּךָ 'but at that time your people will escape'. Here the deliverance of the people is the final point of connection with Jer. 30:7.<sup>460</sup> The LXX translates יִמְלֹט as ὑψωθήσεται 'he will be exalted', referring also to the people. This may also be a faint allusion to Dan. 7:18. There, the interpretation that is given to Daniel of his vision of the 'one like a son of man' is that the 'holy ones of the Highest' are to fulfil the role of the heavenly figure as those who receive the kingdom forever and ever. That being said, Levenson (2006: 184) notes that the wider national focus of Jer. 30:7 is complicated by the national division in Dan. 11:32 between the covenant violators and the covenant keepers.

(viii) כָּל־הַנִּמְצָא כְתוּב בַּסֵּפֶר 'everyone who is found written in the book'. As Collins (1993: 391) notes, the reference here to 'the book' is very likely "the book of life". This notion of a specific book in which individuals are recorded as members of the covenantal community can be found in

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<sup>459</sup> See BDB: 572.

<sup>460</sup> Levenson (2006: 183f).

several passages in the HB (cf. Ex. 32:32-33; Ps. 69:28; Mal. 3:16-18).<sup>461</sup> Most notable of these is Ex. 32:32-33 where Moses pleads with God on behalf of the people during the episode of idolatry with the golden calf:

<sup>32</sup> *“And now, if you will take away their sin – but if not, wipe me out, I pray, from your book that you have written.”*<sup>33</sup> *Then the Lord said to Moses, “whoever has sinned against me, I will wipe him out from my book.”*

Additionally, this reference to the mystical book also recalls Dan. 7:10 in the heavenly court scene where *‘the court was seated and books were open’*, and also possibly the *‘document of truth’* (בכתב אמת) in 10:21. Michael, as one possible identity to whom the appellation כבד אנוש *‘one like a son of man’* might refer in 7:13,<sup>462</sup> may then provide another link to 12:1 where Michael rises as the nation’s defender.<sup>463</sup>

#### 8.4.2. Dan. 12:2

*And many who sleep in the earth of dust will awake, some to everlasting life and some to reproaches - to everlasting abhorrence.*

(i) *‘And many’* ורבים followed by the *מן* preposition strongly suggests a partitive interpretation, as Collins (1993: 392) notes. According to Johnston (2002: 226), the author of Daniel is concerned only with the resurrection of a select group from among Daniel’s own people who have lost their lives in the final stages of the persecution under Antiochus IV, “some to be rewarded for their resistance [and] others to be shamed for their collaboration”. While Johnston (2002: 226) believes that

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<sup>461</sup> See Johnston’s fuller discussion on this topic (2002: 214-16).

<sup>462</sup> Emerton (1958: 238-39).

<sup>463</sup> Nickelsburg (2005: 78).

the passage does not envisage a universal resurrection, he also states that it does not preclude the notion either.<sup>464</sup> Steinmann (2008: 556) cites the use of רבים at Dan. 9:27 referring to the messianic covenant made with many, which he understands as universal in meaning, and therefore that the same ‘many’ should likewise be understood as universal in 12:2. However, he admits that a partitive interpretation is the most obvious reading (560). In light of מִן, it is difficult to force a translation that reflects a universal reading of מִן רבים unless רבים can somehow be interpreted as *all*.

Di Lella (1978: 307) compares the use of “many” in the reference of the blood of Jesus being poured out for “many” (Greek: πολλῶν) in Mark 14:24 and Matt. 26:28, and discusses the possibility that here רבים is a Semitism for “all”. Like Steinmann, however, he admits that this is improbable due to the מִן preposition, where the natural reading is partitive.

Regarding the issue of Persian influence on Dan. 12:2, it seems implicit in the partitive interpretation that the dead more generally remain in the grave, or perhaps in Sheol. Persian notions of resurrection, on the other hand, envisage a restoration of all the dead. The renovation of the world, wherein the Zoroastrian resurrection takes place, is brought about by a messianic-like, priestly figure called the *Saoshiyant*. In the Young Avesta, there are many *saoshiyants* but only three are named. The third of these, *Astvat-ereta*, is the one who cleanses and renovates the entire world, at which time all of the dead rise and are made imperishable.<sup>465</sup> It is also important to note that most Zoroastrian texts of the Old and Young Avesta were orally transmitted until they were fixed in writing around the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. so it is difficult to know for certain how close a resemblance Daniel’s resurrection has to that of Zoroastrianism.<sup>466</sup> Additionally, Bremmer (2002: 49) notes that Christianity was also becoming very influential in Iran prior to the rise of Islam in the region and suggests that Christianity’s doctrine

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<sup>464</sup> Johnston (2002: 226n) also cites Esth. 8:17, Ezra 3:12 and 2 Chron. 30:18 as examples of רבים plus מִן, where a partitive meaning is likely intended.

<sup>465</sup> Rose (2011: 27).

<sup>466</sup> So Rose (2011: 243); Bremmer (2002: 47).

of resurrection may have had an influence on the Zoroastrian version. That is not to say that the Zoroastrian doctrine could not have existed in a more developed form prior to the rise of Christianity in the region, but what the two faiths share is a heroic priestly figure who plays an eschatological redemptive role: the third Saoshyant, *Astvat-ereta*, in Zoroastrianism, and of course Jesus the Messiah in Christianity. Furthermore, both faiths envisage a resurrection of all the dead.

(ii) מִי־שָׁנָי *‘from those who sleep’*. A construct plural adjective of יָשָׁן used here as a substantive to describe the state of death for the ‘many’ who will be resurrected.<sup>467</sup> The phrase *‘those who sleep in the earth of dust’* echoes Isa. 26:19 (שְׁכֵנֵי עֶפֶר *‘dwellers in the dust’*). The HB frequently utilises ‘sleep’ as a metaphor for the state of death.<sup>468</sup> Collins (1993: 392) also notes the language of sleeping and waking for resurrection in Jer. 51:39, 57, and Job 14:12, but states that the possibility of resurrection is denied in these passages. That being said, the HB’s use of יָשָׁן to describe death, where waking from death to describe resurrection in Isa. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2 naturally follows (see note (iv) below), does not find an equivalent metaphor in Zoroastrianism;<sup>469</sup> the imperishable resurrected body in Zoroastrianism was conceived of as a “veritable recreation” rather than one of a deceased individual waking from death as in Judaism.<sup>470</sup>

(iii) אֶרֶץ-עֶפֶר *‘earth of dust’*. According to Talmon (1960: 167-68), אֶרֶץ-עֶפֶר is likely a conflation of two synonyms, which therefore constitutes a double reading.<sup>471</sup> Both terms are highly

<sup>467</sup> The LXX uses καθεύδω ‘1. to sleep, 3. to be dead, sleep’ (BDAG: 490.) to translate יָשָׁן in Dan. 12:2. However, this is the only instance where καθεύδω is used to translate יָשָׁן when it refers to the sleep of death. Cf. Ps. 88:6 (MT)/Ps. 87:6 (LXX) where καθεύδω is used for שָׁכַב ‘lie down’, referring to the sleep of death. More commonly, however, the LXX uses κοιμῶ ‘to be asleep’ for passages where שָׁכַב refers to lying down in death. Cf. Gen. 47:30; Deut. 31:16; 2 Sam. 7:12; 1 Kgs 1:21, 2:10; Isa. 14:8, 18, 43:17, 50:11; Ezek. 31:18, 32:21, 27, 28, 29, 30; Job 14:12, 20:11, 21:26; Lam 2:21.

<sup>468</sup> Wright (2003: 109). Cf., for instance, the use of קָיָן and יָשָׁן (as well as the noun שְׁנָה/שָׁנָה) in relation to death: 2 Kgs 4:31; Isa. 26:19; Jer. 51:39, 57; Pss. 13:4, 17:5, 76:6, 90:5; Job 3:13, 14:12.

<sup>469</sup> Madigan and Levenson (2008: 175).

<sup>470</sup> Greenspoon (1981: 260).

<sup>471</sup> The LXX does not translate עֶפֶר, but creates a phrase using πλάτος ‘breadth, width’ (BDAG: 823) in an attempt to make sense of the Hebrew: ἐν τῷ πλάτει τῆς γῆς ‘in the flat of the earth’ (NETS). Talmon notes that the LXX inverts the cases, whereas Theodotion, though he follows the LXX, retains the word order

significant theologically, as they may allude to the well-known curse on mankind in Genesis 3:19. There may also be a connection with Sheol here. Collins (1993: 392) notes that Sheol, which he calls the “standard view” in ancient Israel (394), is sometimes called a land, though ארץ is the common word chosen for this designation rather than ארמה.<sup>472</sup> However, if the conflation ארמת־עפר is, in fact, an allusion to Gen. 3:19, then there would be a clear rationale for the author’s choice of ארמה in lieu of ארץ. There are numerous passages connecting עפר with death and in some cases the underworld.<sup>473</sup> The parallelism of ‘dust’ with Sheol in Job 17:16 is the clearest example. Furthermore, in Ps. 22:30, the phrase כל־יורדי עפר ‘*all who descend to the dust*’ echoes the more common underworld allusion יורדי בור ‘*those who descend to the pit*’,<sup>474</sup> and strongly suggests that עפר may be taken as a synonym for Sheol.<sup>475</sup>

(iv) יקיצו ‘*they will awake*’. Given the HB’s frequent use of the metaphor of ‘sleep’ for death, קיץ is surely the most significant biblical term for resurrection. Curiously, Greenspoon (1981: 254) sees the majority of the standard resurrection terms as closely related to קיץ with the only exception being קום ‘to arise, stand up, stand’. Greenspoon convincingly highlights the correlation of other resurrection terms with ‘sleeping’ and ‘waking’, yet seems to have overlooked the connection of ‘waking’ with קום. It too should be linked to ‘waking’, as it appears in Isaiah 26:19 immediately before קיץ (יקומוֹן הקיצו ורננו שכני עפר). Additionally, in Jonah 1:6, the prophet descends into the lower

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of the Hebrew: ἐν τῷ γῆς χωματι ‘*in the earth soil*’. Cf. Hab. 1:6 (MT: לְמַרְהֲבֵי־אֲרֶץ, LXX: πλάτη τῆς γῆς ‘*breadth of the earth*’).

<sup>472</sup> See also: Tromp (1969: 23-46); Johnston (1993: 27-43).

<sup>473</sup> Cf. Gen. 3:19; Job 7:21, 10:9, 17:16, 20:11, 21:26, 34:15, 40:13; Pss. 7:6, 22:16, 30, 30:10, 44:26, 90:3, 103:14, 104:29; Eccl. 3:20, 12:7; Isa. 26:19.

<sup>474</sup> Throughout the HB there are approximately sixteen occurrences of the phrase יורדי בור ‘*those who descend into the pit*’: Pss. 28:1, 30:4, 88:5, 143:7; Prov. 1:12; Isa. 14:19, 38:18; Ezek. 26:20 (2x), 31:14, 16, 32:18, 24, 25, 29, 30.

<sup>475</sup> So Charles (1929: 327); Nickelsburg (2006: 30); Johnston (1993: 20-26; 2002: 83-85). Johnston lists בור, באר, שחת, אבדון, and בליעל as Sheol synonyms, but does not mention עפר.

part of the ship to sleep, whereupon the captain commands him to rise (קום קרא אל־אלהיך) and call for God's help on their behalf. Of course, Jonah is not rising from death in this instance but from ordinary sleep, and furthermore, the imperative use of קום here echoes God's double imperative call of the prophet in verse 2, קום לך 'Rise! Go!'. However, linking קום with sleep, even if it is only ordinary sleep, is possible with this example. Moreover, יקומון on the tail end of Isa. 26:19a immediately preceding הקיִצו in 19b, reflects an understanding of קום as a key resurrection term that can be related to waking from death, especially as it forms the parallel in 19a with ויחי, another standard resurrection term.

(v) להי עולם 'some to life everlasting'. עולם appears only in Daniel 12:2. Collins (1993: 392) notes a comparable expression, חיי נצח, in 1QS 4:7. However, in Gen. 3:22 there is the phrase וחי לעולם 'and live forever', which may support the possible allusion to the Genesis curse with אדמת־עפר as discussed above. It is difficult to determine exactly what the author means by עולם in terms of duration, and it is possibly erroneous to impose contemporary theological notions of 'perpetuity' or 'eternity' on the biblical term, even if there is room for this given the term's use in describing God's eternal nature.<sup>476</sup> According to Hill (1967: 168), the expression simply connotes continuing life "of the remotest time (forwards)". This may be so but its distinctiveness in Dan. 12:2 seems to imply something more profound, especially in the context of eschatological judgment.

(vi) ואלה לחרפות לדראון עולם 'and some to reproaches, to abhorrence everlasting'. The author's awareness of the so-called 'Isaianic Apocalypse' (Isa. 24-27) is also evident here, as we find חרפה used in Isa. 25:8 to describe the reproach of God's people being taken away from the earth after death has been swallowed up in verse 7. Furthermore, דראון 'aversion, abhorrence',<sup>477</sup> only occurs

<sup>476</sup> Collins (1993: 392). Cf. for instance, Gen. 21:33; Isa. 26:4 and 40:28.

<sup>477</sup> See BDB: 201.

here and at Isa. 66:24 where those who rebelled against God will be *לכל-בשר דראון* ‘an abhorrence to all flesh’ and will suffer judgement where ‘their worm will never die and their fire will never be extinguished’. Plausibly, in light of the Isaianic language already identified in Dan. 12:2, the appearance of *דראון* likewise indicates the author’s awareness of Isaiah. In light of its use in Isa. 66, where righteous look upon the corpses of the sinners, Lacocque (1976: 241) suggests that *לאחרפות* is an explicative gloss on *דראון*, and that the LXX translation as *διασπορὰν* ‘dispersion’ is perhaps a corruption of *διαφθορὰ* ‘destruction, corruption’, as we find in Ps. 16:10 where *διαφθορα* it is used for *שחת*. In this way, the nature of the resurrection along with the reward or punishment for the contrasting groups of ‘sleepers’ also underscores the notion of ‘everlasting’.

#### 8.4.3. Dan. 12:3

*And the wise will shine like the brightness of the firmament and those who lead the many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.*

(i) *והמשכלים* ‘And the wise’.<sup>478</sup> The identity of the *משכלים* has been much discussed, and scholarly opinions vary.<sup>479</sup> Nickelsburg (2006: 38) notes that the hiphil of *שכל* can be used transitively to mean ‘instruct’. Goldingay (1989: 279) notes that in Qumran literature *משכיל* commonly refers to a teacher.<sup>480</sup> The plural hiphil participle with the definite article in 12:3 indicates that they are viewed

<sup>478</sup> Syr.: “Those who perform goodness and wisdom” (Collins, 1993: 369).

<sup>479</sup> So for example: Charles (1929: 329) views the *maskilim* as “the teachers and leaders of the faithful”; for Montgomery (1927: 458, 472), they are “the learned” or “the wise” teachers of Israel; Driver (1900: 189, 202) understands *משכלים* as “a term of approbation” referring to the leaders of the loyal Jews, and those who showed wisdom and refused to give up their faith during the persecution; Porteous (1965: 168) views them as the “wise leaders of the people”, meaning those who came forward in the resistance, but not especially scribes or sages. See also Collins’ discussion ‘*The Wisdom of the Maskilim*’ (1977: 210-12).

<sup>480</sup> Nickelsburg (2006: 38) also cites 1QS iii.13 and 1QS ix. 12-19. See also, Dan. 9:22. There, Gabriel assumes the role of bringing insight to Daniel (*יצאתי להשכילך בינה*).

here as a specific group. They are likely the same group referred to at 11:33 and 35, and especially 11:33, where ‘*the wise among the people (וּמְשִׁילֵי עַם)* will bring understanding to many’.<sup>481</sup> As with Dan. 12:1-2, Isaiah is the main precursor text for 12:3. The main parallel text is the Servant song in Isa. 52-53, specifically 52:13 and 53:11 (see point (iii) below), where YHWH states that his servant ‘*will act wisely*’ (יִשְׁכִּיל עֲבָדִי), and furthermore, that he will be exalted.<sup>482</sup>

(ii) יִזְהָרוּ כְּזֹהָר הַרְקִיעַ ‘*they will shine like the brightness of the firmament*’. While the noun זֹהָר ‘*shining, brightness*’, occurs here and Ezek. 8:2, this is the only biblical occurrence of the verb (hiphil) referring to shining. The brightness of the firmament is to be equated with the stars, and the exaltation of the *maskilim*, as those who shine *like* the stars, perhaps indicates that they are in some way to be associated with the host of heaven or angels (cf. Dan. 8:10; Collins, 1993: 331-33, 393). In any case, the martyrdom of *maskilim*, which appears to come in 11:33 and 35, where they ‘*fall with sword and flame*’ and ‘*fall to be refined, purified and made white until the end time*’, is here rewarded by their eternal position of honour.<sup>483</sup>

The implication of justice for the martyrs may also find a connection to Isa. 26:21. There, following the earth’s birthing of the dead in verse 19, it appears that the earth, as a witness, will reveal the blood that was shed upon it.<sup>484</sup> This may be a faint allusion to Cain’s murder of Abel in Gen. 4:8, where the earth’s disclosure in Isa. 26:21 echoes Abel’s blood crying out to God from the ground in Gen. 4:10. Furthermore, the passive participle of הָרַג in Isa. 26:21 referring to the slain is the same verb used for the murder of Abel in Gen. 4:8. In this way, as Isa. 26:21 implies justice for those who have been murdered and given that Isaiah is consistently the precursor text for Daniel, the author of

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<sup>481</sup> In the LXX of 12:3, the wise do not play an active role in leading ‘*the many*’ to righteousness: “*And those who are intelligent will light up like the luminaries of Heaven, and those who strengthen my words will be as the stars of Heaven forever and ever*” (NETS). Similarly, in 11:33, the LXX translates יִבְיִנוּ reflexively, where the wise themselves understand much before being martyred, and ‘*the many*’ are missing from the verse.

<sup>482</sup> So Collins (1992: 393); Hendel (2008: 270); Wright (2003: 115).

<sup>483</sup> Goldingay (1989: 308).

<sup>484</sup> Watts (1985: 342).

Dan. 12:1-3 is perhaps following the sequence in Isa. 26:19-21 and making a similar connection of justice for the martyrs in 12:3.

(iii) ומצדיקי הרבים *‘and those who lead the many to righteousness’*.<sup>485</sup> This phrase appears to derive from Isa. 53:11: לרבים עבדי צדיק צדיק *‘My righteous servant will justify many’*.<sup>486</sup> It has been suggested that the *maskilim* make the *rabbim* righteous through their martyrdom, as a kind of atonement or propitiatory sacrifice in light of the suffering servant of Isa. 53.<sup>487</sup> While this may be possible, it is likewise possible that, given their role as teachers, as discussed above, the *maskilim* are perhaps priests or sages (cf. Deut. 33:10; Mal. 2:4-7). Goldingay (1989: 303) notes the Danielic significance of the verb בִּין in connection with the *maskilim* in 11:33, which may relate to the interpretation of dreams, visions and prophecy in Daniel. In this way, the role of the *maskilim* is perhaps prophetic and priestly, as well as being one of teaching and leading the multitude to greater faithfulness in the face of persecution.

(iv) ככוכבים לעולם ועד *‘like the stars forever and ever’*. Collins (1974: 57) notes that the stars “had long been identified with the angelic host in Israelite tradition”, and there is a strong parallel here with 1 Enoch 104:2 in the promise of vindication for the righteous:

*Take courage, then; for formerly you were worn out by evils and tribulations, but now you will shine like the luminaries of heaven.*<sup>488</sup>

Notions of astral immortality were evidently popular in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds,<sup>489</sup> and Hellenistic notions of astral immortality may have had some influence on the Jewish

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<sup>485</sup> In place of ומצדיקי הרבים *‘and those who lead the many to righteousness’*, the LXX seems to have καὶ οἱ κατισχύοντες τοὺς λόγους μου *‘and those who strengthen my words’*.

<sup>486</sup> So, for example, LaCocque (1976: 245); Goldingay (1989: 308); Collins (1993: 393); Wright (2003: 115); Nickelsburg (2006: 39); Hendel (2008: 270).

<sup>487</sup> So Collins (1993: 393); LaCocque (1976: 230).

<sup>488</sup> Nickelsburg (2005: 112); Translation: Nickelsburg and Vanderkam (2012: 160).

<sup>489</sup> LaCocque (1976: 244).

apocalypticists.<sup>490</sup> However, the כ preposition on כזהר 'like the brightness' and ככוכבים 'like the stars' unavoidably renders the imagery purely figurative. These phrases more likely refer to the permanence and eternal honour bestowed on the resurrected *maskilim*, as opposed to their actual nature. Moreover, the use of star metaphors and imagery is well attested throughout the HB. In Gen. 37:9, for instance, Joseph's father, mother and brothers are characterised by the sun, moon and eleven stars. Being his elders, the imagery may indicate that his parents and siblings hold positions of honour, which appropriately heightens the offensiveness of Joseph's dream, as those with higher familial status ultimately bow down to him. Also, in Num. 24:17, there is Balaam's oracle of a messianic ruler, the star of Jacob, who defeats Israel's enemies. Then there are the numerous passages comparing Abraham's descendants with the stars of heaven in reference to their number and the promise of God to Abraham.

## 8.5. SUMMARY

The phraseology in Dan. 12:1-3 demonstrates a clear linguistic connection to the greater prophetic corpus, especially Isa. 26:19 and Jer. 30:7. The phrase ובעת ההיא in Dan. 12:1 not only links with other eschatological passages but echoes קץ ובעת in Dan. 11:40, and signifies that the author is likely concerned with the end times or culmination of history, as well as the fate of the nation. This is also made clear in the LXX. Out of the many occurrences of the phrase ובעת ההיא, this is the only example in the HB where עת is translated in the LXX as ὥραν 'hour'. Here it seems clear that the intention is to draw a connection with 11:40, where we have the phrase καὶ καθ' ὥραν συντελείας 'and according to the hour of consummation'. The phrases ויהיתה עת צרה and the following phrase והיא

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<sup>490</sup> As noted by Collins (1993: 394).

לְאֶ-נְהִיטָהּ מִחַיּוֹת גּוֹי עַד הַעֵת אֲשֶׁר (see 12:1 at points (v) and (vi) above), further demonstrate the linguistic connection of Dan. 12 with other biblical passages, and may underscore the eschatological nature of the events being predicted here. Moreover, if we accept Nickelsburg's judicial understanding of עֲמֹד, the context of final judgment wherein the resurrection of the dead occurs in verse 2, is also strengthened.

In Dan. 12:2, a sizable collection of individuals is then resurrected from the dead for judgement. The language of 'everlasting life' and 'reproaches - to everlasting abhorrence' marks the resurrection in Daniel 12 as literal rather than metaphorical, as may be the case in Isa. 26:19. However, as we have seen, Dan. 12:2 echoes Isa. 26:19 to the extent that the Danielic author may have understood the Isaianic passage as referring to a literal rising from the dead. This is especially clear in the author's use of the same language of sleeping and waking, which ties Dan. 12:2 to Isa. 26:19, as well as other biblical passages where death is described in terms of sleeping.

Regarding the older scholarly assertion that Jewish resurrection, as we find in Dan. 12, was borrowed from ancient Zoroastrianism, there are distinct differences between the Persian and Jewish concepts that call this into question. First, the language of sleeping and waking does not feature in Persian resurrection. There, the dead are given new life, recreated and renewed. Second, the seemingly unavoidable partitive interpretation of רַבִּים plus מִן in verse 2, stands in direct contrast to the universal resurrection and renewal of the entire world by the Messiah-like *Saoshyant* in Zoroastrianism. Furthermore, given that the Zoroastrian literature was not fixed in writing until the Sassanian period and later, Persian resurrection may relate more readily with the Christian eschaton and the universal resurrection that we find there. The situation of the Antiochene persecution and the need for justice, along with the language used to describe it, further renders the function of the resurrection in Dan. 12 as Judeo-centric and culturally distinct. These differences do not, of course, prove that Jewish resurrection is not influenced by Persian oral traditions regarding their own concept of the resurrection of the dead, but the extent to which this occurs has certainly been overstated in previous scholarship.

Finally, regarding the wider issue of Israelite/Judahite beliefs about death and the afterlife, continuity with Sheol may be viewed in the construct אֲדָמַת־עֹפָר in verse 2. Here, the partitive interpretation of רַבִּים plus מִן may indirectly imply that those who are not resurrected remain, as it were, in the dust of the earth, or perhaps Sheol. Other passages making use of עֹפָר in relation to death and Sheol, such as Job 17:16, Ps. 22:30, and the possible allusion to the curse of death on humankind in Gen. 3:19, may then support the construal of עֹפָר as a Sheol synonym.

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## CONCLUSION

The broader purpose of this study was to provide a panoramic view of Sheol in the HB and to analyze Sheol alongside the key biblical passages that relate to, or directly refer to resurrection either literally (Dan. 12:2) or metaphorically (Ezek. 37). In doing so, the aim was to establish a conceptual, linguistic and theological link between Sheol and the concept of resurrection as we find it in its early stage of development in the HB. As a result, this study has found that the presumed distinction between Sheol as the “standard view” in ancient Israel, with resurrection being a later postexilic development, with possible foreign origins, is a tenuous view. The biblical materials analyzed in this thesis display a range of interrelated ideas regarding Sheol and resurrection. Alongside Sheol itself, the themes of deliverance from Sheol and the brink of death, returning to life from the dead, and YHWH’s ultimate authority over life and death, were present in the language and literature of biblical faith well before the emergence of the belief in an eschatological resurrection. I contend that this is strong support for the internal Jewish development of resurrection and that the concept of Sheol was far from preclusive of other post-mortem ideas. Rather, the nuanced biblical portrayal of Sheol in specific passages may have been the precise soil needed for the belief in resurrection to emerge, especially in times of national crisis.

## 9.1. SHEOL

With respect to the underworld, this thesis has sought to problematize the primary underworld term *Sheol* by way of highlighting its various nuances, comparing and cross-referencing each biblical occurrence, and demonstrating that the biblical portrayal of the Hebrew underworld is especially complex and highly nuanced.

In the course of this study, we have seen how Sheol in the HB displays functions and features that are consistent in certain ways and inconsistent in others. Across the greater majority of the sixty-six biblical occurrences, Sheol is frequently aligned with the wicked, the threat of death from enemies or illness, and premature or tragic death either as a result of folly or as part of divine judgment.

Relatively few occurrences allow us to interpret Sheol as the post-mortem destination of all, good and bad alike, according to the standard definition. An indiscriminate underworld with regard to the righteous and wicked is possible in Genesis and 1 Kgs 2:6, 9, but untimely and tragic death in Genesis, and punishment for betrayal and wickedness in 1 Kgs 2 appear to necessitate the mention of Sheol in those texts. The clearest example of an indiscriminate underworld is found in Eccl. 9:10. However, given the tortuous and investigative nature of the book of Ecclesiastes, it is problematic to construct a definition where Eccl. 9:10 is the prime example.

One aspect of the standard definition of Sheol is that there is no return therefrom. This is explicitly stated in only one out of the sixty-six biblical occurrences: Job 7:9. Other Sheol and non-Sheol passages allude to this notion (cf. 2 Sam. 12:23; Jon 2:6; Job 10:21-22, 14:12, 16:32), but return from Sheol, on the other hand, is also spoken of in a variety of ways. First, it is affirmed that the impermanence of Sheol is a possibility in light of the power and authority of YHWH over life and death (1 Sam. 2:6; Deut. 32:39). As we have seen, this becomes a key feature of biblical resurrection. The possibility of a return, therefore, even if it had not actually happened, was a seed of hope in a more positive afterlife. Similarly, the resuscitation narratives in 1 and 2 Kgs, where a return from actual

death appears to be the literal meaning of the texts, likely contributed to the fabric of the belief in the resurrection. Job 14:13 expresses the desire for return after a sojourn in Sheol, even if this is merely a fanciful wish and not Job's actual belief. The deliverance psalms, which include Isa. 38 and Jon. 2, tell of being delivered from Sheol and restored to life. Though the psalmists, Hezekiah and Jonah are not, in fact, dead, their restoration is, nevertheless, spoken of in such terms. In this way, it is not difficult to see how such texts might have played a role, however small, in the internal Jewish development of resurrection.

### 9.1.1. Chapter 1

Chapter 1 introduced the outline of this thesis, but also provided a brief background to Sheol. As is often noted, the etymology of Sheol is uncertain. Scholars have sought answers from Israel's ancient Near Eastern neighbours looking for possible connections with either foreign underworld deities or place names. Arnaud's identification of the deity *šū-wa-la* with Sheol is the strongest contender, but still, this is not widely accepted. The two main proposals from Hebrew are applicable in various ways, but if Sheol's etymology may be said to be a case of Occam's razor, then the most obvious answer would be a derivation from the verb שאל *šāl* 'to ask'. In this way, שאול in the HB, and in relation to death and beyond, is like the name of Saul meaning 'asked for', or 'inquired of'. שאול is a literary moniker or pun with שאל as its root used to denote the unknown aspects of death, what is unseen, or that which is only known to God. This does not mean that the Israelites in the biblical period did not have a concept of the underworld, like other cultures, but the biblical authors saw no reason to attempt to elucidate what was unknown or known only to YHWH (cf. Job 26:6; Prov. 15:11). Sheol's almost exclusive use in poetry and the lack of prosaic descriptions of the underworld in the HB attest to this fact.

While the main terminology synonymous with Sheol has been discussed at length, most notably by Johnston, I also introduced the possibility in chapter 1 that עֶפְרָא might be added to the collection of Sheol synonyms. This is due to very strong connections with death and the grave, with the underworld in various places and with resurrection, especially in Isa. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2.

### 9.1.2. Chapter 2

Following the brief introduction to my analysis of Sheol in chapter 1, the initial study of Sheol in the Torah demonstrated an immediate problem with defining Sheol. While the generic concept of Sheol being the underworld, or a place below to where one descends, is present in all seven occurrences, a uniform exposition of Sheol becomes problematic when other features are emphasised. For instance, Sheol in Deut. 32:22 is not on its own distinctly the grave, as it appears to be in the Genesis occurrences. Similarly, Sheol as the lowermost tier in the cosmos is not a clear feature in the Genesis occurrences, as it clearly is in Deut. 32:22. Furthermore, Sheol in Num. 16 is not so much the grave as it is the underworld, and while it is described there as deeper than the surface of the earth, or the supernatural orifice that swallows the rebels, it is only implicitly the lowermost tier in the known world.

We have seen that the occurrences in Genesis ostensibly support a general concept of the underworld where even the patriarchs expected to go upon death. However, the mention of Sheol also appears to function here as a poetic reference to the grave; that is to say, the mention of Sheol infuses the narrative with pathos and heightens the drama of the narrative. This is the case for both Jacob's initial mournful statements regarding Joseph and Benjamin, as well as the subsequent variations in the speech of Judah. Importantly, Sheol is noticeably absent from the actual accounts of the patriarch's deaths, which also suggests that Sheol is a term that is only appropriate in a negative context in relation to death.

In Num. 16, Sheol is a feature of the cosmos that already exists. From the details examined in this chapter, Sheol lies beneath the surface of the earth. The surface of the earth is what is given the newly created mouth that swallows the rebels alive with all of their families and possessions. Here I have also suggested that the well-known underworld phrase *'those who descend into the pit'* may, in fact, derive from this story. While admittedly this is difficult to demonstrate conclusively, I have highlighted strong linguistic connections with Prov. 1:12 that corroborate this theory.

In Deut. 32:22, Sheol is clearly an extreme locale in the universe; Sheol is the lowest conceivable point in the cosmos. This is consistent with the cosmological implications in Num. 16, but significantly, YHWH transcends all such extremities and has jurisdiction even over the underworld. While the inexorability of divine judgment here may be viewed as infusing Sheol itself with retributive aspects to its nature, it does not take part in the actual punishment in Deut. 32 in the same way as in Num. 16. Rather, Sheol, as in Am. 9:2, is spoken of as an extremity which is not beyond the reach and authority of YHWH.

### **9.1.3. Chapter 3**

In chapter 3, the panoply of Sheol occurrences analyzed was shown to be extremely nuanced and colourful, yet notably consistent in terms of being aligned with the wicked, idolatry, divine judgment and descent thereto.

For the occurrences of Sheol in the Former Prophets, the term functions in a similar way to the Torah occurrences. In 1 Sam. 2:6, the theme of YHWH's ultimate authority over all things, including the underworld, resonates with that of Deut. 32:22. The emphasis in 1 Sam. 2:6, however, concerns YHWH's authority over life and death. Importantly, the possibility of return from Sheol in light of YHWH's absolute authority is fundamental to the later concept of resurrection.

The occurrences in 1 Kgs 2:6, 9 are comparable with the four occurrences in Genesis. They

appear as part of David's instructions to Solomon on how to punish Joab and Shimei. Like the Genesis occurrences, both men are advanced in years, which is indicated by the phrase אֶת־שֵׁיבֶתוֹ 'his grey head'. They are not to be allowed to finish their lives in peace but the two men are to be executed. These two occurrences ostensibly support the notion that one may live a peaceful and prosperous life before death and descent into Sheol, but the term is applied here as part of their punishment. In this way, the mention of Sheol is appropriate in the context, and like Genesis, its presence accents the drama of these verses.

In the books of the Latter Prophets, Isaiah contains the greatest number of Sheol occurrences. In Isa. 5:14, Sheol is the consequence of the pride and folly of Jerusalem's social elite and their failure to acknowledge the provision and deeds of YHWH.

In Isa. 7:11, we found that שְׂאֵלָה is a unique example of abstract usage of the term as the greatest conceivable depth in the cosmos set as the obverse of the greatest conceivable height. Importantly, there are no other familiar features attached to Sheol here and the term is distinctly figurative.

In the taunting song of Isa. 14, Sheol functions as YHWH's agent of humiliation and punishment of the king of Babylon. Here, YHWH is clearly the victor in the song. With this as my interpretive foundation, I argued against the usual personification of Sheol as the one who rouses itself and raises the dead Rephaim from their thrones to greet the king upon his arrival in the underworld. Rather, according to the gender of the verbs, YHWH is the rouser and raiser and the one who initially stirs up the underworld. In this way, Sheol refers metonymically to the denizens of the underworld who are roused by YHWH. While admittedly this is syntactically problematic, I believe it makes far greater sense of the content of the poetry and its overall purpose as a taunting song against the Babylonian enemy. I also noted that the portrayal in 14:9 is of an otherworldly experience for the king's disembodied soul, whereas in verses 11 and 15, the mention of worms and maggots appears to convey the experience of his corpse in the grave. Arguably, this again underscores the poetic pliability of Sheol.

In Isa. 28, the covenant with death and pact with Sheol, as well as the refuge and shelter in lies and falsehood, constitutes a dysphemism for the people's shifted allegiance from the covenant with YHWH to pagan deities, and perhaps also false prophets. The covenant with YHWH is a covenant with life and protection. A covenant with any other deity, likely Molech in this case, is a covenant with death and Sheol.

The prayer of Hezekiah in Isa. 38 resembles other deliverance psalms. Sickness and the threat of enemies are present in the prayer, and Hezekiah praises YHWH for his rescue and healing from the brink of death and Sheol. The phrases '*I am appointed for the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years*', and '*those who go down to the pit*' seem to indicate that Hezekiah perceived his illness as judgment and separation from God. In his illness, he is on the brink of death and bitterly prays to God reminding him of his righteousness. The result is that his life is prolonged and the city is delivered from the threat of Assyria. Importantly, Sheol is not mentioned in Hezekiah's actual death but is mentioned in connection with a negative death as the result of divine judgment.

For Isa. 57:9, I have suggested that the passage may share a connection with Isa. 28 where the people are similarly engaging in idolatrous practices and seeking the guidance of the infernal deity, Molech. This is indicated by the mention of slaughtering children in the valleys in 57:5b, which draws a known practice in connection to the worship of Molech (Lev. 18:21). The mention of valleys is perhaps a topographical detail relating to Jerusalem, in particular, the Valley of Hinnom (2 Kgs 23:10). Idolatry and the pursuit of other deities are thus clear in this passage, where Sheol is, on the one hand, an extreme locale, and on the other, the place where the messengers or necromancers are sent to inquire of Molech.

In Hos. 13:14, the Hebrew text is puzzling, and this makes the interpretation of this passage especially difficult. Possible ambiguity is generated by some of the peculiar terms, which perhaps opened up the possibility for the positive interpretations we find in Isa. 26 and 1 Cor. 15. However, it was determined that the context of chapter 13, as well as 14c, rendered this verse negative. Sheol

functions here is the mass grave of Ephraim, being the state of that nation in exile post-judgment. Additionally, the theme of exile and the notion of return from Sheol for the nation relates well with the restoration and resurrection of Israel in Ezek. 37. Furthermore, in addition to the later positive interpretation in Isa. 26:19, this passage is significant in the development of resurrection concepts.

In Am. 9:2, Sheol is understood as the locus of the dead and relates also to the concept of Sheol being an extreme locale in the cosmos. This aspect of Am. 9:2 is comparable with Deut. 32:22, Isa. 7:11, 57:9 and Ps. 139:8. The passage concerns YHWH's inexorable judgment, which is achieved by way of an ironic depiction of one wishing to escape judgment by either digging into the underworld where the dead already reside or ascending the heavens where God resides.

In Jonah 2:3b, Sheol is part of a unique construct phrase: *מִבֶּטֶן שְׂאוּל* 'from the belly of Sheol'. As an integral part of the narrative, its use here is clearly figurative. The viscera of the fish and the belly of Sheol are parallel. Different interpretations view the fish as either the vehicle of Jonah's salvation or his death, but initially, it seems that the fish in connection with Sheol is a very real death threat before Jonah prays for forgiveness. He is ultimately delivered, and, as the viscera of the fish is likened to Sheol for its death potential, Jonah's deliverance is a strong example of a return from a predicament that was Sheol for Jonah. In this way, this passage may have also been a precursor text that contributed to the development of belief in the resurrection.

For Hab. 2:5, some scholars view there a personification of death as a reference to the "swallowing god of Death", Mot. With some connections to idolatry in the context, Hab. 2:5 may refer to the Canaanite deity. However, as with other passages discussed above, the mythological link with Mot is typically overstated. There are unmistakable thematic connections, especially between the throat or gullet of Sheol and that of Mot, but to read Hab. 2:5 as such detracts from the figurative aspects of the text. The verbs present are 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine singular, which indicates that the king of Babylon, in light of his own insatiability and greed, is here likened metaphorically to death and Sheol. Sheol in Hab. 2:5 then, is the insatiable underworld of the dead.

Finally, the use of Sheol in the above prophetic texts is colourful and imaginative, but roundly negative. Sheol's status as the underworld remains constant, but this does not preclude a more imaginative and variegated use of the term, especially in Isa. 7:11 and 14:9, 11 and 15.

#### **9.1.4. Chapter 4**

In the Psalms, Sheol is an unwelcome fate and one that the psalmist wishes to avoid or prays to be delivered from. The deliverance psalms, where the psalmist praises YHWH for having already delivered him from Sheol, make it clear that severe adverse circumstances in the form of extreme mental anguish, physical illness, or crippling fear in the face of potential death, may be viewed as a state of Sheol. Furthermore, ten of the fourteen psalms containing Sheol are also Davidic psalms, nine of which are prayers for deliverance from enemies (Pss. 6, 9, 18, 30, 31, 55, 86, 139, and 141), which is a major theme in connection with Sheol. The implicit threat in this instance appears to be untimely death by the enemy's hand. Exactly who the enemies are in general is difficult to determine, but Ps. 18 (= 2 Sam. 22) provides this detail in the superscription (Saul) and is the only psalm in the collection of Sheol psalms to do so. As the underworld, Sheol might be said to function properly as such in Pss. 9, 16, 30, 31, 49, 55, 141, but it is also clear that Sheol is largely synonymous with the common grave and untimely death in particular.

In Ps. 6, death and Sheol represent the ultimate exile and the complete cessation of life. The psalmist prays for deliverance from possible physical illness, but also from his enemies, and ultimately he is delivered. Sheol is synonymous with death in this psalm and is a very real threat. It is also the state of extreme mental anguish in the face of the above threats.

In Ps. 9, there is a clear distinction between the wicked nations and the people of God. The respective fates of the wicked and the needy are also spoken of in eternal terms. The wicked are those who forget God and the implied fate for them is that they are forgotten in Sheol. To be remembered

may then constitute a kind of afterlife for the righteous. This does not preclude ultimate death and burial, but Sheol is not an appropriate term for describing their end.

Ps. 16 is a psalm of praise for deliverance. The important lexical items in this psalm are **שְׁהוֹת** and **נַפְשׁ**. It was determined here that these terms relate to corruption in the grave the life of the psalmist. There are, however, several features that have played a role in thought on the afterlife and resurrection. The final phrase of the psalm intimates that God's right hand might constitute an afterlife for the psalmist: **נְעֻמֹת בְּיַמִּינְךָ נִצְחָה** 'At your right hand are pleasures forever'. Following verse 10, this is the only obverse given for death and corruption, as noted by Johnston (2002: 221). Implicitly then, to descend into Sheol at death is to be forsaken or abandoned by God, which here is not the fate of the faithful.

Ps. 18 (= 2 Sam. 22) is a deliverance psalm, where Sheol is the imminent threat of death posed by David's enemies, namely Saul. This is made clear by the superscription, but also by the chiasm I have highlighted, where the term **בְּלִיעֵל** is paralleled with Sheol. **בְּלִיעֵל** is an important term in relation to Sheol and, as noted by Emerton (1987: 216) and Johnston (1993: 26), typically describes worthlessness and the evil character of people.

Ps. 30 is yet another psalm praising God for deliverance from enemies (verse 2) and is replete with underworld phraseology. The description of being drawn up (**דָּלִיתָנִי**) and having his soul raised up (**הֶעֱלִיתָ**) from the underworld (**מִן־שְׁאוֹל**) in 2b and 4a indicates that, for the psalmist, the circumstances from which he was delivered were in some way an actual experience of Sheol.

In Ps. 31, Sheol is the underworld and a place of silence. Though the connection with silence has been questioned by various scholars, silence among the dead is compatible with the underworld. The hope and will of the psalmist are that the wicked would be shamed and sent to Sheol in silence. Sheol here is a destiny that is feared but also aligned with the wicked. The threat is untimely death and separation from YHWH at the hand of the psalmist's enemies.

In Ps. 49, Sheol occurs three times, which is an unusual concentration of the term. Here, Sheol is distinctly the fate or way of the foolhardy and the wealthy fools who trust in their worldly affluence. As noted, much of the psalm contains sapiential language, and therefore, Ps. 49 may be viewed as a wisdom psalm. That being said, for God to ransom one's soul from death and Sheol is potentially a resurrection antecedent. The questioning of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous readily suggests that the obverse is ultimate justice for the righteous. Is this an intimation of immortality or an afterlife? Given the language of eternity in verses 10 and 12 and the hope of continued communion with YHWH, such a notion is difficult to ignore.

In Ps. 55, Sheol is the destination of the wicked enemies of the psalmist. Descending alive into Sheol recalls Num. 16:30-33, and the notion of the wicked entering Sheol alive, surprised and fully cognizant of their wickedness, lends a supernatural dimension to Sheol. Notably, the psalmist's desire for his adversary's annihilation is clearly different from what he hopes for himself. Sheol is not Hell, as in the AV, but this occurrence may well have contributed to the development of such ideas.

Sheol in Ps. 86 is likely a close encounter with death at the hand of the psalmist's enemies, that, in light of having been delivered therefrom, the psalmist praises God. It is a state of distress, albeit a deathly one, that the psalmist has been healed of and so describes his situation in terms of being rescued from Sheol itself.

Ps. 88 is famously bleak. It is a lament psalm, with language that is steeped in underworld terminology and phraseology, the dramatic language employed in the psalm appears to describe a state of extreme mental and emotional distress, and strangely, there is no resolution. However, the psalmist's questioning of God's treatment of the dead (verse 11-13) and his determined effort to continue crying out to God (verse 10 and 14) intimate the possibility of restoration. His condition is very much one aptly described as Sheol, which is the result of divine judgment and implicitly aligned with the wicked.

Ps. 89:49 also falls in the lament section, and is appropriately existential. Sheol is parallel and synonymous with death. The rhetorical question regarding deliverance further underscores the

inexorability of death. However, there is the implication that while one is incapable of delivering one's own soul from death and Sheol, YHWH is capable. While God-forsakenness is a theme here, the positive affirmation of YHWH's power to deliver from death is notable. It also relates to Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6 as possible antecedents to resurrection.

In Ps. 116, the woes or perils of Sheol have “found” the speaker. This is a figurative expression and a variation on ‘*the ropes of death*’, which the psalmist mentions as something he himself has found or happened upon. Ps. 116, however, is a deliverance psalm praising YHWH for answered prayer and deliverance from mental anguish and an adverse state that is described as Sheol and the brink of death.

Ps. 139 is characterized by special praise of YHWH's infinitude, and consequently, there is nothing especially sinister attached to Sheol in verse 8. The verb plus Sheol (אֶצִּיעָהּ שְׂאוֹל) seems to function as a euphemism for death, and in this way, the theological point is thus clarified; that is, YHWH is all powerful and omnipresent even among the dead.

Finally, in Ps. 141, the various details around Sheol are consistent with the general conception of Sheol being the place of the dead and under the earth. The anthropomorphic feature of a mouth implying a consuming underworld is comparable with other Sheol passages. As in Num. 16, אֶרֶץ is not synonymous with Sheol itself, but functions as the mouth of Sheol. In this way, Sheol may be seen as taking on a supernatural or otherworldly depth as the place of the dead, and quite distinct from the earth's surface.

#### **9.1.5. Chapter 5**

The portrayal of death and Sheol in the book of Job is an extremely complex topic. A thorough exploration of the wealth of material there could easily generate its own monograph. For the scope of this thesis, it was not possible to address all the related terminology, phrases and allusions to the

underworld in Job. However, for the actual occurrences of Sheol, several important features were noted.

First, in my analysis of Job 7:9, I found that the traditional comparison between the vanishing cloud in 9a and Sheol in 9b was dubious. Unpacking the composition of the pericope demonstrated a series of segues leading the interpretation to each subsequent phrase or idea concerning death. I found that the statement concerning Sheol in 9b was more about the permanence of death, whereas 9a and the vanishing cloud was about the frailty and transience of life. These ideas are obviously closely related ideas, but the composition of this passage negated a strict comparison of Sheol with the cloud metaphor. This is also the only occurrence of Sheol in the HB that clearly states there is no return from death and the underworld. Other passages in the HB make similar statements about death (2 Sam. 12:23; Jon 2:6; Job 10:21-22, 14:12 and 16:32), but the importance of this observation is in highlighting Sheol's close synonymy with death.

The occurrence of Sheol in Job 11:8 is the only instance in the book where Job is not the speaker. This occurrence is also similar to Isa. 7:11 in that Sheol functions in both passages as the opposite cosmological extreme of the greatest conceivable height, or the heavens. Job 11:8 describes the limits of God as unsearchable and unattainable, and for this reason, Zophar asks how it is possible for Job to claim that he is righteous in God's eyes. This occurrence of Sheol then is limited to its figurative use as an extremity deep below the earth, where the emphasis, rather, is on God's inscrutable wisdom and depth.

In Job 14, according to Job's worldview, Sheol may yet be a land-of-no-return, but he expresses a wish here that it could be otherwise. He discusses the inevitability of death for humanity and compares this with the hope of a tree sprouting again. Interestingly, while Job seems to affirm that people do not return from death, in verse 12 he says, '*until the heavens are no more, they will not wake*' and then in verse 13 wishes to be hidden in Sheol until God's wrath has passed. The saying in verse 13, however, is best viewed as hyperbolic, and not to be taken as a literal wish to be hidden

away in Sheol and death only to be revived and restored to life at a later time. Importantly, returning from death is an idea that is present in the passage, even if Job ultimately does not believe it to be possible.

The portrayal of Sheol in Job 17:13-16 is as the underworld in the classical sense. However, in his bitter defence and plea of innocence, if Job hopes for Sheol as his house, then he concedes guilt in light of the accusations of his friends. The passage supports an interpretation that sees Sheol as a destiny reserved for the wicked but more so in the use of the term for its association with darkness and negativity than in its exact meaning. Sheol, in other words, is the appropriate term for the context as it is in Genesis and elsewhere when referring to the deaths of the unrighteous.

In Job 21:13, Sheol again refers to the wicked. The passage highlights the injustice of the prosperity of the wicked who die a peaceful death, whereas others, like Job, suffer and likewise die but in abject misery. In this way, Sheol may simply be synonymous with death and the grave here. A long and prosperous life matched with a peaceful death is the ideal end of a person's life. Like 17:13-16, the mention of Sheol may be for comparable poetic reasons, where it is the most appropriate term for the topic. The dark and sinister aspects of Sheol are what deliver the point of the passage most effectively.

In Job 24:19, Sheol assumes a punitive role. The analogy of drought and heat stealing away the snow waters is comparable with the vanishing cloud in 7:9, but here, the analogy denotes the transience of the life for sinners specifically. Their end is premature, and this is what their deeds lead them to. In this way, this example of Sheol is similar to the function of Sheol in Proverbs, where folly leads to a bad life and a bad death.

In Job 26:6, Sheol and Abaddon are paired together in a theological statement about God's ultimate authority, omnipresence and omniscience. This statement is part of Job's defence against Bildad, where he asserts his own knowledge and awareness of God's authority. The theological thrust of this saying is that YHWH has ultimate authority and knowledge over all things both living and dead.

### 9.1.6. Chapter 6

In Proverbs, it was demonstrated that Sheol functions as part of the didactic purpose of the book, especially in its warnings against folly. Sheol is thus aligned with foolishness, sin and the unrighteous.

In Prov. 1:12, Sheol is part of the father's imaginary discourse, where wicked men seek to entice his son to join their gang. The enticers aspire to be *like* Sheol and swallow the innocent so that their victims will be *like* 'those who descend into the pit'. This phrase applied to the innocent is intentionally incongruous, which strengthens the warnings against folly, as well as the importance of heeding instruction and pursuing wisdom. Sheol is here viewed as an instrument of death, and when reflected back onto the sinners in verses 18-19, it is aligned with the wicked and implicitly it is an instrument of God's judgment. As noted, this passage also contains a healthy collection of details relating to Num. 16 to the extent that Prov. 1:12 attests to the significance of that story in relation to Sheol.

Sheol in Prov. 5:5, 7:27, and 9:18 functions as the result of folly and the pursuit of wickedness, which is symbolized by the female stranger or foreigner (זרה) in 5:3, the 'strange/loose woman' (זרה אשה) in 7:5, and the 'woman of folly' (אשה כסילות) in 9:13. Similarly, in 15:24, Sheol is the destination avoided by pursuing the path of life and in 23:14, discipline for a child will steer them away from pursuing folly and suffering the same fate of Sheol. Implicitly, Sheol in these passages equates to premature death, or adverse circumstances in life as a result of living foolishly.

In 15:11 and 27:20, Sheol and Abaddon are paired to form clear indications of the underworld. In 15:11, the theme of God's sovereignty over the underworld is used to convey the message of nothing being hidden; that is, God penetrates all space, including the human heart. In 27:20 and 30:16, however, Sheol relates to the theme of the insatiability of the human eye and heart in 27:20 or death and underworld in 30:16.

This chapter finished with the two miscellaneous occurrences in Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. Eccl. 9:10 is the clearest statement in the HB indicating that Sheol is the destination of all, good and

bad alike. Qoheleth addresses his audience with a collective ‘*you*’, but the saying is part of a directive to live life to the full, for ‘*a dog that is alive is better than a lion that is dead*’ (verse 4). However, given the tortuous nature of the book as a whole, deriving anything definitive about Sheol from Ecclesiastes is highly problematic.

In Song 8:6, there have been many attempts at viewing Sheol and death as a reference to other deities, especially Mot. However, this detracts from the point of the verse. The speaker initially says, ‘*set me as a seal upon your heart*’. Seals, perhaps from a signet ring, were a sign of ownership, which underscores the theme of the possessiveness of love. Other death and Sheol passages convey a similar theme of the insatiability and greed of death and Sheol (especially Prov. 27:20 and 30:16). In this way, death and Sheol are compared with the jealousy and exclusivity of romantic love; as Sheol jealously desires the dead, romantic love jealously desires one’s lover. The comparison is clear enough that an allusion to Mot, or some other deity, is gratuitous. The biblical character of Sheol is sufficient for the point of this passage.

## **9.2. RESURRECTION**

My analysis of resurrection in the HB provided a likely textual backdrop for internal Jewish development of the later belief in an eschatological resurrection of the dead. While cultural borrowings or foreign influences are not denied here, there is substantial textual material in the HB alone to support a biblical and Jewish framework for the development of such a belief without substantial reliance on external influences.

Within the purview of the biblical underworld, returning therefrom was never truly impossible. Indeed, rest with one’s ancestors for the righteous, being resuscitated from death, and even immortality are all possibilities in connection with Sheol. As a land of no return, Sheol is explicitly described as such only in Job 7:9. While this concept is also viewed elsewhere referring to death itself, the

possibility of return from Sheol in light of YHWH's authority and power is also found in a variety of texts. It is highly unlikely that, given this biblical material, Jewish resurrection, as we come to it in the Second Temple period, developed independently of these traditions. Furthermore, it is agreed by most scholars that Dan. 12 is to be dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E., but it is also highly improbable that the diverse texts this study has found to support the above conclusions are all to be dated to the same period as Daniel. For this reason, this thesis finds that the presumed bifurcation between Sheol and resurrection in the HB is a simplistic reduction of the biblical material and, therefore, untenable.

### **9.2.1. Chapter 7**

The occurrences of Sheol in Ezek. 31 and 32 were reserved for this chapter, alongside my discussion of the resurrection metaphor in Ezek. 37. While the argument of this chapter was not so much concerned with the question of authorship, I noted the conspicuous repetition of certain phrases both relating to the underworld and other topics of concern. While these phrases are found elsewhere in the HB, the book of Ezekiel displays a surprising accumulation of them. As a stylistic quirk, this is possible evidence of either a single author or redactor. The importance of this for our purposes, however, is that we have a unified collection of material discussing both Sheol and resurrection in a very similar way. I have argued in this chapter that both Sheol and resurrection in Ezekiel function in their respective chapters as metaphors for either the fall of the nations in chapters 31 and 32 or the rise of the nation in chapter 37.

The nations in chapters 31 and 32 are described as falling from the world stage into the underworld. Sheol, with its attendant underworld phraseology, serves a larger metaphorical description of the rise and fall of these nations. However, it is important to note that this is not a description of their actual descent and residence in the underworld at that time. This is clear from the fact that Egypt, as the focus nation, did not cease to exist in the late Iron Age but ceased to be the leading superpower.

YHWH is also the author of their prosperity and demise; the god of Israel is sovereign over all nations. This is also true for Israel in chapter 37.

The macro-theme of Ezek. 37 is the restoration of the entire nation of Israel, both northern and southern kingdoms. The chapter is divided into two halves bearing this theme. Verses 1-14 describe the state of the nation's exile as national death and as a valley of dry, disarticulated bones. Their restoration to their own land is inconceivable so much so that for this to happen it would be no less miraculous than a return from death. In the second half of the chapter (verse 15-28), this message is reiterated in the prophet's symbolic act of binding the two sticks inscribed with the respective names of the northern and southern kingdoms. Chapter 37 is a prophetic textual diptych foretelling the ultimate restoration of the entire nation of Israel into one kingdom. They are to be restored to the land of Israel and live under the Davidic king (verse 24).

I have argued that, in a similar way to the resurrection metaphor in chapter 37, Sheol is likewise employed metaphorically in chapters 31 and 32. In this way, it seems likely that both concepts of Sheol and resurrection were known to the author, and presumably his audience. For the metaphor of resurrection to function properly as such, the concept cannot have been a random notion concocted by Ezekiel. Like Sheol, the concept of resurrection was known. Even if it was not a widespread belief, it is reasonable to assert that the notion of a return from death existed in an embryonic stage, so to speak. For instance, it is possible that the miraculous resuscitations performed by Elijah and Elisha, and Elisha's bones, in 1 Kgs and 2 Kgs were well-known by Ezekiel's time, and this would likely inform the theological musings of priests and prophets.

Importantly, Sheol and resurrection cannot be divorced from the theme of YHWH's ultimate authority and sovereignty over all nations, but also over life and death. It may be said that Sheol is the backdrop in which all other concepts and beliefs regarding death and the afterlife/future life find their starting point. The underworld of the dead is common to all cultures in some form, while resurrection, even if it had not come into its final form, was possible in the faith of Israel, according to what was

traditionally affirmed about the nature and authority of YHWH in passages like 1 Sam. 2:6.

Sheol, being synonymous with death, and the inevitability of death for all living beings, lends death and Sheol an inescapable and immutable power. The psalmist (89:49) asks '*what man can live and not see death? Who is able to deliver his own soul from the hand of Sheol*'. Implicitly, YHWH is the only one able to deliver. This is also reflected in God's rhetorical question to Ezekiel (37:3), '*Son of man, can these bones live?*', to which the prophet answers, '*O Lord, you know*'. The underlying message is that what is impossible for human beings who are subject to the power of death, is possible with YHWH.

Sheol and resurrection cannot be divorced from the theme of YHWH's ultimate authority and sovereignty over all nations. It is best to think of the concept of Sheol and the grave as inclusive. The return to life from the dead, whether literal or metaphorical, in a new and qualitatively different form is within the purview of the concept of the underworld. To be sure, resurrection belief in the eschatological sense of Dan. 12:2, properly emerges as a more developed afterlife/future life concept in the Second Temple period. However, resurrection, as we have it in its early stages in the HB, is highly compatible with the concept of the underworld of the dead.

### **9.2.2. Chapter 8**

In Chapter 8, I discussed the HB's portrayal of resurrection by way of key biblical passages and terminology that appear to intimate survival beyond death, hope in an afterlife, or a return to life. I argued that these passages are possible antecedents to the postexilic belief in the resurrection. In particular, I provided a detailed analysis and discussion of Dan. 12:1-3 preceded by Isa. 25:7-8 and 26:19.

First, I explored some key biblical passages relating to resurrection. In Deut. 32:39 and 1 Sam. 2:6, in the songs of Moses and Hannah, the two salient themes of great importance for unpacking the

concept of biblical resurrection were YHWH's authority over life and death, and national vindication and restoration. While these texts are not affirmations of the belief in resurrection, it is easy to see how songs of praise where it is affirmed that YHWH has the power and authority to kill and make alive would have contributed to the later emergence of the belief.

The importance of the resuscitation miracles in 1 Kgs 17, 2 Kgs 4 and 13:20-21 is that these stories tell of the actual return to life of dead people. These miracles take place specifically as the result of the dead having physical contact with the prophet's themselves, or with Elisha's bones. Important details, such as the apparent disembodiment of the boy's נִפְשׁ that returns to him in 1 Kgs 17:21-22, or the bizarre power of Elisha's bones for restoring life to a corpse, intimate something of an afterlife. The nature of this afterlife is perhaps undeterminable, but these stories surely part of the DNA of biblical resurrection.

For Hos. 6:1-2, it was shown that text connects with Ezek. 37 in three distinct ways. 1. God's authority to restore to life. 2. The revival of the nation conveyed in the language of death and life. 3. The new life is qualitatively different from the old. These are key features relating to the resurrection. In this way, Hos. 6:1-2 contains the necessary features to function as a resurrection antecedent.

In Isa. 25:7-8, in an ironic reversal of the Canaanite myth of the insatiable *Mot*, we read that YHWH will swallow up death forever, and universally for people of all nations. It is this universality of the end of death for all people in 25:7-8 that naturally complements a more literal interpretation of 26:19 as a reference to a physical resurrection of the dead.

As we have seen, 25:8a, while it may yet be a later redactor's interpolation, exhibits an easily discernible rationale behind its inclusion in the passage, and makes perfect sense in the context. Structurally, the repetition of the piel of בִּלְע in 25:7a and 25:8a harmonises these two phrases in such a way that we might view them as bookends to 25:7b and c. Additionally, הַמּוֹת with the definite article likewise harmonises with הַלּוֹט and הַמַּסְכָּה in 7b and c and guides the reader's interpretation of these definite nouns as referring to death itself. This is in no way a personification of death, but if anything

a clear reversal and negation of the Canaanite myth, which is at the very most of only secondary importance here.

In Isa. 26:19 and its wider context, familiar elements relating to Sheol, such as the swallowing of the dead in connection with well-known Canaanite mythology (Isa. 25:7-8), the Rephaim and the dead (26:14, 19), and ‘*dust*’ as a Sheol synonym, show that the language of resurrection is never far from that of death, Sheol and the underworld of the dead. Furthermore, each of these constituent elements, with the exception of the Rephaim, are also present in Dan. 12:1-3, along with phraseology borrowed from elsewhere in Isaiah and the greater prophetic corpus.

Like Ezek. 37, Isa. 26:19 is perhaps strictly a metaphor for national spiritual deadness, either in exile or in the people’s separation from God on account of apostasy or collective sin, as opposed to being a true reference to literal resurrection. In other words, to exclaim that ‘*your dead shall live*’ is another way of saying that the people’s right standing and relationship with their god would be restored; they would live again being reconciled with YHWH. That being said, the wider context in which we find this reference, especially 25:7-8, would also appear to support, at least in part, a literal interpretation. It is easy to see how the author of Dan. 12, along with other later interpreters, might have construed the imagery and language as support for their eschatological hope and belief in the resurrection.

Finally, it was demonstrated that the phraseology in Dan. 12:1-3, the only reference to resurrection widely accepted as literal, displays clear linguistic connections to the greater prophetic corpus, especially Isa. 26:19 and Jer. 30:7. The phrase **וּבֵעֵת הַהִיא** in Dan. 12:1, for example, not only links with other eschatological passages but echoes **קִץ וּבֵעֵת** in Dan. 11:40, and signifies that the author is likely concerned with the end times or culmination of history.

Dan. 12:2 echoes Isa. 26:19 to the extent that the Danielic author seems to have understood the Isaianic passage as referring to a literal rising from the dead. Or, he repurposed this material as a literal resurrection for his apocalyptic vision. However, the literalness of Daniel’s resurrection derives from

the language of ‘*everlasting life*’ and ‘*reproaches - to everlasting abhorrence*’.

That being said, the author’s use of the same language of sleeping and waking from death and from the dust (עפר) ties Dan. 12:2 to Isa. 26:19 but also to aspects of the biblical concept of death, where death is often described in terms of sleeping.

Regarding the issues of external influences on the development of Jewish resurrection, and specifically that the concept was borrowed from ancient Zoroastrianism, it was shown that there are distinct differences between the Persian and Jewish versions of resurrection. First, the language of sleeping and waking does not feature in Persian resurrection. In Zoroastrianism, the dead are given new life, recreated and renewed. Second, the partitive interpretation in Dan. 12:2, is not what we find in Zoroastrianism. The resurrection of the dead in Zoroastrianism is decidedly universal. It envisages a resurrection of the entire world by the Messiah-like *Saoshyant*. Zoroastrianism was largely an oral tradition, and its beliefs were not fixed in writing until the Sassanian period and later. For this reason, view the possible influence of Christian resurrection.

The situation of the Antiochene persecution and the need for justice is also cited as a possible reason for Jewish appropriation of Persian resurrection beliefs. However, given the biblical material analyzed here and in chapter 7, it more likely that the events of the Antiochene persecution forced Judaism to look inward. From the linguistic connections to the wider prophetic corpus highlighted in Dan. 12:1-3, the portrayal of the resurrection in Daniel is Judeo-centric and culturally distinct. The differences I have underscored here do not prove that Jewish resurrection was not in some way influenced by Zoroastrianism, but the extent of this influence has likely been overstated in earlier scholarship.

Finally, I argued that continuity with Sheol may be viewed in the construct ארמת־עפר in 12:2. The partitive interpretation of ארמת־עפר plus מן may indirectly imply that those who are not resurrected continue to sleep in the dust of the earth, or perhaps Sheol. If עפר is to be viewed as a Sheol synonym in the passages I have highlighted to support this view, which I believe it should, then ארמת־עפר

provides a conceptual link with earlier notions about the underworld and grave. In this way, Sheol and resurrection need not be viewed as two distinct notions. Rather, the broader picture of death, the underworld and the hereafter in the HB displays a progressive development that finds its canonical apex in the resurrection of Dan. 12:2.

### **9.3. FUTURE RESEARCH**

This thesis has sought to problematize the biblical portrayal of the underworld by way of an exegetical analysis of each biblical occurrence, highlighting its various nuances and functions. The overview of Sheol from chapters 1 to 6 showed that the Hebrew underworld, especially in relation to the far more frequent references to death in the HB, is an extremely complex topic.

While the etymology of Sheol remains unsolved, the possibility that Sheol is a literary moniker with a free-form malleability or pliability in poetry, especially due to the fact that what lies beyond death remains an unknown, is a point of departure for further study in relation to biblical poetry. Are there other terms in the HB that similarly occur fewer than one-hundred times, are frequently found in poetry and are similarly nuanced posing comparable challenges with regard to their etymology? This is perhaps one valuable question for further research.

This thesis did not have the scope to explore the concept of Hades in Greek literature. Both Hades in Greek literature and Sheol in the HB are found in poetic texts. A detailed comparison of the function and nature of Hades in the writings of Homer, the Orphic literature or other Greek poetry with that of Sheol/Hades in the HB and extra-biblical literature, could also be a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Hebrew underworld. In relation to issues of reception and later interpretations, a comparison of Sheol's reception alongside resurrection in extra-biblical and rabbinic literature in the Second Temple period and early Common Era would also be an important question to pursue.

Finally, issues of death, the underworld and afterlife in the Psalms and Job as independent studies could easily generate their own monographs. The material is rich and replete with details that deserve greater attention than was possible here this panoramic view of Sheol and biblical resurrection.

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