



Why Live?

1. Genesis 1:22, 1:28

And G-d blessed them, saying: Bear fruit and multiply and fill the water in the seas...

And G-d blessed them, and G-d told them: Bear fruit and multiply and fill the land...

2. Genesis 1:29, 1:30

And Gd said to them: Behold, I have given you all of the seed-bearing grasses across the earth, and all of the fruit-bearing, seed-bearing trees; they will be for you to eat.

And [I give] to all of the beasts of the land and all of the birds of the heavens and all that crawls upon the land, which lives, all of the grasses to eat. And it was so.

3. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man* pg. 75

Tzelem signifies man's awareness of himself as a biological being and the state of being informed of his natural drives.

4. Genesis 2:16

And Gd commanded upon the man, saying: From every tree in the garden you shall eat...

5. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man* pg. 5

Gd takes man-animal into His confidence, addresses him and reveals to him His moral will.

6. Genesis 3:6

And the woman perceived that the tree was good for eating, and that it was desirable to the eyes, and that the tree was good for gazing, and she took of its fruit and she ate, and she gave to her husband with her as well, and he ate.

7. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man* pg. 120

Gd forbade man the orgiastic esthetic experience, the acquisition of the pleasure-impulse [as imperative]; he was not allowed to overemphasize the moment of wantonness, making the beauty ideal the fascinating force in human life.

8. Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Rava taught: When a person is brought in for judgment, they say to him:

Did you –

...deal honestly?

...establish time for Torah study?

...involve yourself in procreation?

...anticipate the Messiah?

...delve into fine points of wisdom?

...understand lessons within lessons?

And yet, with all of this - if he possesses awe of Gd in his storehouse then he will do well, but otherwise he will not.

9. Talmud, Makkot 24a

Michah established the mitzvot as three principles... Yeshayah established them as two, 'Guard justice and act righteously'... Amos established them as one, 'Seek Me and live.' Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak asked: Perhaps 'Seek Me' means in the entire Torah? Rather, Chavakuk established them as one, 'And the righteous will live by his faith.'

10. Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, Daat Chochmah uMussar III 295

The issue of bearing the yoke with others is so great, because this is the entire Torah, meaning the joining of souls to feel each others' feelings. All of Torah study, all of the learning and all of the deeds, the final goal is that all souls should be joined, to feel each others' feelings, to truly be one.

11. Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin, citing his father in the preface to Nefesh haChaim

My father always used to rebuke me, as he saw that I would not experience the pain of others. This is what he always told me: "This is a person's entire purpose. A person is not created for himself. A person is created only to benefit others, with whatever power is in his possession."

Why Die?

12. Midrash, Bereishit Rabbah 9:5

They found recorded in Rabbi Meir's teachings: "Behold, it was very good (Genesis 1:31)" – 'behold it was good' is Death.

13. Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary to Genesis 3:6

There is one *ruach* for Man and Beast, with which he lives and feels in this world, and as one dies so the other dies – other than the higher portion which a human has, beyond that of the beast. One of the Greek doctors already brought complete proofs for this, that it is not possible for human life to be unlimited.

What does the Torah believe?

14. Prof. James Tabor, *What the Bible Says About Death, Afterlife and the Future*

First I will consider the notion of the future of the individual human person. The ancient Hebrews had no idea of an immortal soul living a full and vital life beyond death, nor of any resurrection or return from death. Human beings, like the beasts of the field, are made of "dust of the earth," and at death they return to that dust (Gen. 2:7; 3:19). The Hebrew word *nephesh*, traditionally translated "living soul" but more properly understood as "living creature," is the same word used for all breathing creatures and refers to nothing immortal. The same holds true for the expression translated as "the breath of life" (see Gen. 1:24; 7:21-22). It is physical, "animal life." For all practical purposes, death was the end. As Psalm 115:17 says, the dead go down into "silence"; they do not participate, as do the living, in praising G-d (seen then as the most vital human activity). Psalm 146:4 is like an exact reverse replay of Genesis 2:7: "When his breath departs he returns to his earth; on that very day his thoughts [plans] perish." Death is a one-way street; there is no return...

As we move to the period of first Greek and then Roman domination of the eastern Mediterranean world (the fourth century B.C.E. to the first century C.E.), the biblical materials reflect drastic development with regard to the view of the future... Two views dominate: the hope of an eschatological transformation of the cosmos and the notion that an immortal soul escapes the body at death to enter the heavenly world.

15. Rabbi Howard Jaffe, reformjudaism.org

Judaism has, from the Torah itself always spoken of a life following this one. The Torah speaks about what seems to be a physical place, called Sheol, to which one "goes down" following this life. A variety of different passages indicate that Sheol was probably thought of as located in the center of the earth, although it is not ever formally described. What is clear is that this was a well-known concept amongst the ancient Israelites.

It was not until the Pharisees (c. 100 B.C.E.) that the notion of a spiritual life after death developed in any meaningful way in Jewish thought. The Pharisees, who were the forerunners of the rabbis, taught that when the Torah spoke of reward for following G-d's ways, the reward would be forthcoming in an afterlife, Olam Ha-Ba (world to come), as they called it.

16. Samuel I 25:29 (ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.)

If a man rises to pursue you and seek your soul, may my master's soul be bound in the bond of life with HaShem your Gd, and may the souls of your enemies be slung in the bowl of the sling.

17. Samuel I 28

And she said to him: Behold, you know what Saul has done, eradicating the *ovot* and *yidoni* from the land; why are you causing me to stumble, to kill me? And Saul swore to her by Gd: As Gd lives, no sin will befall you in this.

And she said: Who shall I raise for you? And he said: Bring up Samuel for me.

And she saw Samuel and she shrieked loudly, and she said to Saul: Why have you tricked me? You are Saul!

And the king said to her: Do not fear; what did you see? And she told Saul: I saw a *malach* rising from the land.

And he said to her: What did he look like? And she said: An elderly man rising, wrapped in a cloak.

And Saul knew it was Samuel, and he stretched low to the ground and bowed.

18. Isaiah 26:19

Your dead will live, my carcass(es) will rise! Awake and sing, those who reside in the dust, for the dew of lights is your dew, and the earth will cast out the Rephaim.

19. Ezekiel 37:3-4

And He said to me: Son of man, can these bones live? And I replied: Gd, You know!

And He said to me: Prophecy on these bones, and tell them, 'Listen to the word of Gd, dry bones!'

20. Daniel 12:2

And many of those who sleep in the dirt will awaken; these for eternal life, and these for humiliation and eternal shame.

21. Genesis 15:15

And you will come to your ancestors in peace; you will be buried at a good age.

22. Deuteronomy 18:10-11

There shall not be found among you one who passes his son or daughter through fire, or engages in sorcery, or calculates times or uses omens or magic. Or one who practices charms or inquires of *ov* or *yidoni*, or seeks the dead.

23. Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Idolatry 11:16

All of these are words of falsehood and deception, which the early idolaters used to trick the nations to follow them...

24. Prof. Alan Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West*, pg. 37

The person credited with the invention of the pyramid is Imhotep, the great architect of King Djoser (2630-2611 BCE) of the Third Dynasty. He designed the famous step-pyramid as the pharaoh's tomb, which soon evolved into the smooth-walled pyramidal form. Pyramids were exclusively used for royal tombs during this period. The steps suggest a ladder or staircase for the king to ascend to his heavenly abode, as in one of the depictions of the ascent of the pharaoh in the tomb of Unas...

25. Prof. Alan Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West*, pg. 70

Mesopotamian and Canaanite views of life after death were significantly more pessimistic than Egyptian ones. The Egyptian vision of ultimate felicity with the sun god in the sky vanished. Instead, the dead lived underground in estrangement from humans and gods. This more Stoic vision of the afterlife seen in *The Gilgamesh Epic*—the great Mesopotamian epic of loss and bereavement—was even found at Megiddo in the land of Israel. Hebrew tradition seems more closely influenced by Mesopotamian and Canaanite traditions but the presence of other semitic mythologies in the Bible is hotly debated. For one thing, it is hard to know precisely which Bible motifs are Canaanite or Mesopotamian and how deeply they affected Israel. This issue will dog every parallel that we examine.