



What does the Torah believe? (continued)

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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!'

5. 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.

6. Genesis 15:15

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

7. 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.

8. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), 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...

9. 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...

10. 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.

Challenge: Then why are the promises material?

11. Leviticus 26:3-4, 15-16 (JPS 1985 translation, from sefaria.org)

If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant your rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit...

If you reject My laws and spurn My rules, so that you do not observe all My commandments and you break My covenant, I in turn will do this to you: I will wreak misery upon you—consumption and fever, which cause the eyes to pine and the body to languish; you shall sow your seed to no purpose, for your enemies shall eat it.

12. Deuteronomy 28:1-4, 15-16

Now, if you obey the Lord your Gd, to observe faithfully all His commandments which I enjoin upon you this day... Blessed shall be the issue of your womb, the produce of your soil, and the offspring of your cattle, the calving of your herd and the lambing of your flock...

But if you do not obey the Lord your Gd to observe faithfully all His commandments and laws which I enjoin upon you this day, all these curses shall come upon you and take effect: Cursed shall you be in the city and cursed shall you be in the country...

13. Rabbi Hai Gaon (10th century Babylon), cited in Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra to Deuteronomy 32:39

Rabbeinu Hai said that it was not necessary to explain the matter of *olam haba*, for it was known by transmission.

14. Prof. Alan Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West*, pp. 121-124

That the Bible lacks a concrete narrative of the afterlife, as we have seen so often manifested in the pagan cultures around it, must, we suspect, not be just accidental or deficient; it must be part of the Biblical polemic against its environment. In contrast to the plethora of different ideas about life after death, in the great river cultures surrounding Israel, early Bible traditions seem uninterested in the notion of an afterlife. Practically every scholar who systematically surveys the oldest sections of the Biblical text is impressed with the lack of a beatific notion of the hereafter for anyone.

But that is not all that is missing: Virtually the entire mythological framework of cosmological discussion in the ancient world is lacking and the traces that remain are transformed. Everything - rain and dew, crops and increase of flocks, and historical events as well - is due to the Lord, the Gd of Israel. Gone is the exuberant pantheon of exalted, loving, quarreling, and warring gods...

It could be that Hebrew culture foresaw no significant afterlife for the dead, that the covenant had nothing to say about the afterlife except to warn against believing that another god could supply one. That belief would make the Hebrews absolutely unique among world cultures and especially strange in the ancient Near East, where elaborate ideas about postmortem existence and even more elaborate rituals were everywhere part of literature, myth, and social life.

We are not only faced with a huge silence, we are left without conclusive evidence for a sure explanation. How could the Bible have avoided discussing this issue? Since the reasons for the lack of information are obscure, the Bible presents us with the scholarly predicament of a classic argument from silence. The best we can offer is speculation, based on what clues we can find in the text and in archeological records. We know that the Bible's

dislike of foreign cults and gods other than (G-d) demythologized all the gods, turning them into created objects. Presumably, any extended discussion of life after death or the realm of the dead with its pantheon of divinities would open the door for idolatry or veneration of ghosts which the Bible, in its final and present form, has entirely forbidden.

15. Don Isaac Abarbanel (15th-16th century Spain), Commentary to Leviticus 26:1 #5

The fifth answer is that early idolaters promised great material success and benefits... And when He wished to make us complete in the truth of His faith, Gd came and gave us His Torah and prohibited us from those types of service, and so He needed to say – lest one think that in the halting of those types of service, the material benefits would also be lost, as was said by the early ones and as the accursed women said, “Since we ceased to burn offerings for the queen of the heavens, and to pour libations for her, we have lost all. (Jeremiah 44:18)” It would not be so. Just the opposite – by distancing ourselves from those types of service, greater and greater benefits and successes, without measure, would flow upon them under the supervision of Gd.

16. Rabbi Saadia Gaon (10th century Egypt), Ha’Emunot v’haDeiot 9

[P]rophecy customarily expands on that which must happen soon, and it is concise regarding that which is distant. Since the nation, when given the Torah, needed to know about the Land of Canaan which they were approaching, the Torah explained it more, including that which would happen there due to their service or rebellion...

17. Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi (11th century Spain), Kuzari 1:109 (Hirschfeld translation)

[A]ll that our promises imply is that we shall become connected with the divine influence by means of prophecy, or something nearly approaching it, and also through our relation to the divine influence, as displayed to us in grand and awe-inspiring miracles. Therefore we do not find in the Bible: 'If you keep this law, I will bring you after death into beautiful gardens and great pleasures.' On the contrary it is said: You shall be my chosen people, and I will be a Gd unto you, who will guide you. Whoever of you comes to me, and ascends to heaven, is as those who, themselves, dwell among the angels, and my angels shall dwell among them on earth. You shall see them singly or in hosts, watching you and fighting for you without your joining in the fight. You shall remain in the country which forms a stepping-stone to this degree, viz. the Holy Land...

The Place of Reward

18. Talmud, Shabbat 152a

“One goes to the home of his world. (Ecclesiastes 12:5)” Rabbi Yitzchak explained: Each righteous person receives a dwelling befitting his honor.

19. Talmud, Ketuvot 77b

He went and found Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai sitting on thirteen golden thrones.

20. Talmud, Shabbat 152b

The souls of the righteous are stored under the Divine Throne, as it is written, “The soul of my master should be bound in the bond of life. (Samuel I 25:29)”

21. Talmud, Bava Metzia 85a

Rabbi Yonatan said: Anyone who teaches his peer’s child Torah will merit to sit in the Yeshiva above, as Jeremiah 15:19 says, “If you will return, I will bring you back, before Me you shall stand.”

22. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei haTorah 4:9

When the physical entity, formed from the elements, disintegrates, and the *neshamah* is lost since it is not found outside the body and it needs the body for all of its actions, the *nefesh* still is not lost. It does not need the *neshamah* for its actions; it knows and understands intelligences which are separate from the material, and it knows Gd, and it lasts forever. This is what Solomon said, in his wisdom: “The dust will return to the earth, as it was, and the Ruach will return to the Gd who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12:7)”