

OCTOBER

THE REALITY OF HELL

There is a subject that is seldom discussed seriously. Both Jewish people and Gentiles, who are not Bible believers, do not consider the possibility that there is a real place after death that is called Hell. Many jokes are shared regarding Hell so the reality of such a place is determined not to exist. The word Hell does not enter into conversation by unbelievers, except it is used in humor. There is a reason for this conception that such a place after death is not real. Many people, if they believed in Hell, would not know how they could avoid going there after death. Therefore, the most comfortable attitude for unbelievers to have is to ignore the subject. Death is an ever present reality, especially when a family member or friend has died. They wonder, where are they? What has happened to them? As with Gentiles, there are many questions in the minds of Jewish people about death, but they do not know where to find answers.

There are three words in the original text of the Bible that tell us where people will go after they die. These words are translated Hell in most versions of the Bible. The Jewish Bible word for Hell in Hebrew is Sheol. In the New Testament, Hell is translated from the Greek words Hades and Gehenna. Sheol in the Jewish Bible is the same place as Hades in the New Testament. Sheol and Hades both have two dwelling places that are separated from each other by a great gulf. Souls do not pass from one place to the other. The people who died who had their sins forgiven by God went to the righteous side of Sheol/Hades where they lived in peace and God's provision. This righteous part of Sheol/Hades is not located where God is in Heaven. Sinners who died are now in the place of suffering in the side of Sheol/Hades for unbelievers.

Gehenna is actually eternal Hell. It is mentioned eleven times in the New Covenant such as in Matthew chapter 10, verse 28: ***“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him (God) which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Gehenna).”*** The sinner in Hell for eternity will still have an eternal spirit, soul and recognizable body. It is a place of extreme suffering as we will see in this study of Hell.

Does God, through the Jewish prophets, tell the children of Israel that there will be eternal punishment for those who have rejected God's plan of salvation and die in their sins? Yes! We read in the Jewish Bible in Isaiah, chapter 33, verse 14: ***“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”*** To ***“dwell”*** is to live in. This fire burns but it does not consume human beings. The sins of the people will cause them to be cast into ***“fire and everlasting burnings.”*** There will be no atheist in Hell. It will be too late then for them to repent and be forgiven of sin. Decisions that affect eternity must be made while we are still alive here on earth.

What does the Jewish Bible teach concerning "Sheol?" After death, do people have consciousness? In the Bible, God, through the Jewish prophet Ezekiel, gave us the following judgment upon Egypt and King Pharaoh in chapter 31, verse 2: **"Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh King of Egypt, and to his multitude..."** verses 16-17: **"I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to Sheol (Hell) with them that descent into the pit...They also went down into Sheol (Hell) with him to them that be slain with the sword..."** chapter 32, verses 21 and 31: **"The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of Sheol (Hell) with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword...Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord God."**

What do we learn from these verses of scripture? Pharaoh and his army die in battle and then go to Sheol. In Ezekiel chapters 31 and 32, the armies of other nations also die in battle and go to Sheol. After King Pharaoh and his army died and were buried, they are in Sheol. What do we learn about Sheol? People **"speak"** out of the midst of Sheol. Pharaoh **"shall see them"** – he had eyesight in Sheol. Pharaoh was **"comforted"** over the death of his army when he saw the death of the armies that slew his soldiers and they came to Sheol also, the same place. Pharaoh had emotions in Sheol. After Pharaoh died and was buried, he had the same emotions and eyesight that he had when he was alive on earth. The emotions would have come from his memory of the battles on earth where his army was slaughtered. There is life after death!

The Jewish man of God, Isaiah, recorded the Word of God in chapter 14, verses 9-17: **"Sheol (Hell) from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth;...All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp (ostentatious show or display) is brought down to Sheol."** (The word "grave" is in the text, but the Hebrew is Sheol.) In these verses in Isaiah we learn that there is life in Sheol. People speak to one another and are weak in Sheol.

In 2 Samuel, chapter 22, verse 6 we read: **"The sorrows of hell (Sheol) compassed me about..."** Psalm 116, verse 3 tells us: **"...and the pains of hell (Sheol) got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow."** These verses in the Bible clearly state that in Sheol there is sorrow and pain.

Jewish King Solomon recorded in Proverbs, chapter 5, verses 4-5, and chapter 7, verse 27 further truth regarding Sheol: **"But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell (Sheol)."** **"Her house is the way to hell (Sheol), going down to the chambers of death."** God tells us in these verses of His word that this person's sinful life would lead her to death and then to "Sheol" or Hell.

There is another truth that we must understand in order for us to have a clear picture of Sheol. Sheol is not just a place of suffering for the ungodly who die in their sins. Sheol

was made up of two parts that were separated by a great gulf that no person could pass over. One part of Sheol was the abode of those who died with sin in their lives; they entered a place of suffering. The other part was the abode of the righteous whose sin was forgiven by God. These people had repented, asked God for His forgiveness, and had the blood of atonement to be cleansed of all sin. These righteous believers lived in peace and joy.

King David of Israel recorded the following in Psalm 16: verses 8-11: ***“I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou (God) wilt not leave my soul in hell (Sheol); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*** (King David foretells the resurrection of God’s Holy One who is the Messiah. King David’s body did see corruption in the grave but the One David speaks of would not see corruption.) ***Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at the right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”*** After Messiah would come to provide the blood of atonement for us to be forgiven of our sins, He would take the righteous part of Sheol up to where God’s throne is in Heaven above. When we die today and are buried, our spirit and soul in a recognizable form will be in Heaven. Sheol, a place of suffering will still be below with those who died in their sins. These Bible verses will be discussed.

King David has the assurance that after he died, he would have fullness of joy and pleasures forever in the presence of God. He knew that though his soul would be in Sheol for a time, after that he would dwell with God for eternity in Heaven. What peace and joy that brings to believers in God’s plan of redemption from sin!

A clear picture of Hades is given to us in the Bible book of Luke, chapter 16, verses 19-31. This portion of God’s word records for us the words of Messiah Jesus; it is a true account about real people. It is a stern warning for all people to seek God’s forgiveness of their sins while they still have time.

We read: ***“There was a certain rich man*** (this just happened to be a rich man, but the following could happen to any man or woman) ***which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.*** (He had the life that so many covet today – financial security with all the comforts he desired.) ***And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”*** Lazarus was a poor, sick man with nothing of this world’s goods. There is quite a contrast between these two men as far as worldly possessions and position is concerned.

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell (Hades which is the same as Sheol) he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

This is a startling picture of contrasts. The position these two men had upon earth is now dramatically turned around. They both died. We will see that the riches of the affluent man meant nothing after his death. The poor situation of the man who had nothing of this world's goods now is turned around and he has everything he needs for an eternity filled with peace and God's provision!

Lazarus, the poor, sick man, is now in perfect health in the presence of Abraham. Notice that when Lazarus died, he was carried by angels to be with Abraham in a wonderful new dwelling place which was the abode of the righteous after death at that time in history. Psalm 23, verse 4 encourages believers with the truth that God will be with us and comfort us when we die and pass from this life to Heaven. Verse 25 says that Lazarus was **"comforted"** in his new life. What joy, peace, and rejoicing must have been in the life of Lazarus in his new home! The old, very hard life that he had on earth is now a thing of the past, it is gone. He is in the presence of the family of God. His abode is still called Hades/Sheol. Today Lazarus is in Heaven above with God and the believers of all history.

We know that this place to which people went after physical death had two different parts. One part was for those whose sins had been forgiven. Though the text does not say that Lazarus' sins had been cleansed, we know this is true by the fact that Lazarus went to where Abraham was. Abraham was called the "friend of God" and certainly was in the place of the righteous.

The man who had all of the earthly possessions and riches he could desire also died and was buried. We read of him in verses 23 and following: ***"And in hell (Hades/Sheol) he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."***

We are now given understanding as to just what it is like in Hades (Sheol) for people who die in their sins. This would be the same place we read about in the Jewish Bible that gave us a picture of suffering, sorrow and pain. All people who die in sins will suffer the same horrible fate.

The man who called upon Abraham for mercy had all of his senses that he had when he was alive on earth. He could feel for he was ***"tormented in this flame."*** He recognized Lazarus and spoke of him by name, so he had memory. Also, he knew Abraham a great distance away. How he knew Abraham is not mentioned, but he had knowledge of Abraham. ***"He lifted up his eyes...and seeth Abraham...and Lazarus"***, so he had ***"eyes"*** to see. He desired water to cool his ***"tongue"*** and relieve his pain, so he had a ***"tongue"*** and knew what water could do for him. He ***"cried"*** for relief, so he could feel. Lazarus had a body also for the man in suffering spoke of the ***"finger"*** of Lazarus.

The fact that people cannot go from the wicked, suffering side of Hades to the place where the righteous are is given in verses 25-26: ***“But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from thence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.”*** Decisions regarding sin, the forgiveness of sin and eternity are made in this life. There is no second chance after death. There are people who believe that there is a chance that they will go to Heaven after they have spent some time of suffering someplace after death. There are religions that say there is a second chance. Some teach that everyone will go to Heaven eventually. There is no place in God’s Word that gives any basis for this false hope. Sinners who never trusted in God’s plan of salvation will not have a second chance to be forgiven of their sins after the die.

Have you ever heard a person say, *“If I saw someone come back from the dead, then I will believe?”* God speaks to this issue in verses 27-31: ***“Then he (the man in the suffering side of Hades) said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him (Lazarus) to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he (the lost rich man) said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he (Abraham) said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”*** This man in torment remembered his five brothers on earth who were unbelievers. He said his brothers would not believe Moses and the prophets, or God’s Word in the Bible, but if one rose from the dead and testified to them, they would believe. Abraham said this man’s brothers would not believe the words of one who rose from the dead! People, when alive, must believe the words of Moses and the Jewish prophets or what God has said to us in the Bible. The Bible is the source of all truth from God. Faith in the Word of God alone will give you the way to be forgiven of all sin and the assurance that you will go to Heaven when you die.

There are many Bible verses that speak of judgment and Hell. In Revelation, chapter 20, verses 11-15 we read: ***“And I saw a great white throne, and him (God) that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven (the lowest heaven) fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (Hades) delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell (Hades) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”***

This is God’s final judgment of people who have died with unforgiven sin in their lives. Sinners in Sheol/Hades are brought to the Great White Throne judgment. From this

judgment, God will cast the sinners into everlasting fire and punishment. Revelation, chapter 21, verse 8 warns sinners: ***“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*** Most people do not commit the horrible crimes that are mentioned in this verse. But included among those who will spend eternity in Hell are ***“the unbelieving,”*** those who do not believe God’s Word – the Bible. Also included are ***“all liars.”*** Romans, chapter 3 verse 23 says clearly: ***“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*** God has provided the way to be forgiven of sins as we read in the Bible book of Romans, chapter 5, verses 8-9: ***“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his (Messiah Jesus) blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”***

Seek God today. Put your trust in His provision for you to be forgiven of your sins. You will then have peace and joy in living, and death will not take you to eternal Hell but will be your doorway to Heaven. If you are not certain of what you should believe, ask Almighty God to show you the truth that He has given for all people to believe. Read the articles on this website that I have written as a Jewish Bible-believer. Listen to the audio that I have recorded to share my faith in the God of Israel, Messiah and God’s plan for our lives to have peace today and for eternity in Heaven. This is all Jewish from the God of Israel for both Jews and Gentiles.