

## **The Resurrection and the Old Testament: A Fresh Look in Light of Recent Research**

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“In so far as the ancient, non-Jewish world had a Bible, its Old Testament was Homer. And in so far as Homer has anything to say about resurrection, he is quite blunt: it doesn’t happen.”<sup>1</sup> This statement sets the table for the fundamental challenge faced by early Christians on this topic. Christianity was born into a world where its central claim was “known” to be false.<sup>2</sup> Outside Judaism, nobody believed in resurrection, at least not in the way that the Bible defines it.<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say that the ancient world had no concept of life after death. If Homer functioned like the Old Testament for the Hellenistic world, its New Testament was Plato.<sup>4</sup> Plato had no need for resurrection because he understood the human person to be divided into two distinct

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<sup>1</sup> N. T. Wright, “The Resurrection of the Son of God,” *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, volume three (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 32.

<sup>2</sup> Recall the mocking response of many of the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill when Paul brings up the resurrection of Jesus in Acts 17:31-32.

<sup>3</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, “Complete History of the Resurrection: A Dialogue with N. T. Wright,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26:4 (2004): 491-492; Timothy Keller, *King’s Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 216; John J. Tietjen, “A Book Worth Discussing: The Resurrection of the Son of God,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 32/2 (April 2005): 96; Wright, *Resurrection*, 35.

<sup>4</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 47-48. Homer is generally reckoned to have lived around the Eighth Century BC and Plato in the late Fifth to early Fourth Century BC. See note 87 on page 48 of Wright, *Resurrection*.

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parts; a mortal, material body and an immortal, immaterial soul that lives on after death.<sup>5</sup> So for Plato, death affects only the body, not the soul.

Before going any further it would be wise to define exactly what I mean by resurrection. Resurrection is not a general term for life after death in all its forms,<sup>6</sup> it refers specifically to the belief that the present state of those who have died will be replaced by a future state in which they are alive bodily once more.<sup>7</sup> This is not a redefinition of death, but the reversal or defeat of death, restoring bodily life to those in which it has ceased.<sup>8</sup> While the resurrected body may be different in many ways, it is as material as the first body, usually arising at the very place of death, wearing clothes, and arising with recognizable, physical characteristics of the former life.<sup>9</sup> Resurrection in the fullest sense requires the belief that human beings are whole persons, with unified body, soul and spirit. That means that, in the Seventh-day Adventist view, resurrection is absolutely necessary in order to experience life beyond the grave.<sup>10</sup>

According to the ancients, a lot of things happened after death, but bodily resurrection was not one of them, it was not a part of the pagan's hope for the future.<sup>11</sup> Death was like a one-way street, you can travel down that street leading to death, but once at your destination you can't come

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<sup>5</sup> John C. Brunt, "Resurrection and Glorification," in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen, *Commentary Reference Series*, volume twelve (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 365.

<sup>6</sup> Resurrection, re-incarnation, immortality of the soul, etc.

<sup>7</sup> This is well expressed in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*: "Ultimately the dead will be revived in their bodies and live again on earth." Moshe Greenberg, "Resurrection in the Bible," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, edited by Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, volume 17 (Detroit: Thomson- Gale, 2007), 240.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 201.

<sup>9</sup> Albrecht Oepke, "ἐγείρω, etc." in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume two, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 337.

<sup>10</sup> P. G. Damsteegt, primary contributor, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 356.

<sup>11</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 38, 85. Although other scholars might qualify the statement a bit, Wright goes on to say (page 76), "Nobody in the pagan world of Jesus' day and thereafter claimed that somebody had been truly dead and had then come to be truly, and bodily, alive once more." On pages 32-84 of his monumental work Wright summarizes the evidence for his categorical claim.

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back.<sup>12</sup> The ancient Greeks did allow that resurrection could possibly occur as an isolated miracle, but such are either fictional or are more like resuscitations than genuine resurrections.<sup>13</sup> The idea of a true resurrection, particularly a general resurrection at the end of the world, was alien to the Greeks.<sup>14</sup> This means that something happened to Jesus that had happened to no one else in the ancient world.<sup>15</sup> What is particularly striking is a sudden proliferation of apparent deaths and reversals of deaths in the ancient pagan world beginning with the mid to late First Century AD and for centuries afterward.<sup>16</sup> It is quite likely that these were influenced by the New Testament stories of the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 81-82.

<sup>13</sup> Albrecht Oepke, “ἀνίστημι, etc.,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume One, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 369. On the difference between resuscitation and resurrection see Edith M. Humphrey, “Which Way Is Up? Revival, Resurrection, Assumption, and Ascension in the Rhetoric of Paul and John the Seer,” *ARC* 33 (2005): 328-330. See also Michael Welker, “Wright on the Resurrection,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60 (4, 2007): 462-466.

A couple of examples of such “isolated miracles” in ancient Greek literature can be found in the play *Alcestris* by Euripides and the novel *Callirhoe*, by Chariton. *Alcestris* is the only tale containing a true resurrection in the entire ancient world. The heroine of the story, Alcestris, does in fact return from the dead to bodily life, but even this is not a true parallel to New Testament resurrection; like Lazarus she will presumably die again. Even so, intelligent pagans in Jesus’ day dismissed the story as a mythic fiction (see Wright, *Resurrection*, 67, but see Stanley E. Porter, “Resurrection, the Greeks and the New Testament,” in *Resurrection*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes and David Tombs [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 52-81). The story of *Callirhoe* tells of an empty tomb, with a mourner going at dawn and finding the grave stones moved away, the rumor spreading quickly, and others coming to the tomb and finding it empty. This is a most interesting parallel to the New Testament, so much so that it is more likely to have been influenced by the New Testament than the other way around. By in this fictitious story no actual resurrection occurs and nobody in the story supposes that it actually can (see Wright, *Resurrection*, 68-72).

<sup>14</sup> Oepke, *TDNT*, 1: 369.

<sup>15</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 81-82.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>17</sup> See note 13.

### Resurrection in the Old Testament

#### The General Picture

To those accustomed to reading the Old Testament through the lense of the New, it may come as a surprise that much of the Old Testament reads like Homer.<sup>18</sup> In the words of Job himself, “life is but a breath. . . he who goes down to the grave does not return. He will never come to his house again” (Job 7:7-10, NIV).<sup>19</sup> “At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again. . . . so man lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep” (Job 14:7, 12, NIV).<sup>20</sup> Words like these sound like a one-way street.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 87-93. See also Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, edited by David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, volume 20 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 302; Ernest Renan, “The Cry of the Soul,” in *The Dimensions of Job: A Study and Selected Readings*, edited by Nahum Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 119; Alan F. Segal, “Resurrection, Early Jewish,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, volume 4 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 769.

<sup>19</sup> In this text Job knows nothing of a redemption from the grave, there is no second life after the present. There is a finality to death. Since there is no resurrection, Job feels free to express his opinions while he has life left, as there is no lasting consequence to doing so. The Akkadians (contemporary with an early date for Job) called death “The land of no return” (Marvin H. Pope, “Job: Introduction, Translation and Notes,” *The Anchor Bible*, William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, general editors [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965], 59). See also F. Delitzsch, “Job,” translated from the German by Francis Bolton in two volumes, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, volume four (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 1: 121-123; Francis I. Anderson, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, edited by D. J. Wiseman (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 136; Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Grey, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job, Together with a New Translation,” *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921), 69-70; Greenberg, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 17: 240. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, on the other hand, suggests this statement is no denial of the resurrection, it is simply not relevant to the particular context to mention it. F. D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ten volumes (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), 3: 518.

<sup>20</sup> According to Delitzsch (*Job*, 227-230), Job was a true child of his age on this issue. See also John J. Collins, “Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel,” in *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, edited by Frank Moore Cross (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 392; Delitzsch, *Job*, 227-230; Driver and Grey, *Job*, 127-129; George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah I - XXXIX*, in two volumes, *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), 1: 447; Nahum Glatzer, *The Dimensions of Job: A Study and Selected Readings* (New York: Schocken

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It is not that the writers of the Old Testament were deeply disturbed about this.<sup>22</sup> Old Testament Israelites were attached to life, they did not invest much energy in dreaming of a life hereafter.<sup>23</sup> As with Job, they were interested in the outcome of God's judgment in the here and now.<sup>24</sup> They did not believe that human beings have innate immortality.<sup>25</sup> Rather, they believed that life comes from God (Gen 2:7), returns to Him (Eccl 12:7), and the dead lose consciousness and never again have a part in what happens under the sun (Eccl 9:5-6).<sup>26</sup> *Sheol* or the grave was a place where the whole person goes at death. It is not a place of consciousness or purpose.<sup>27</sup>

So for most of the Old Testament the idea of resurrection was, at best, dormant.<sup>28</sup> The two or three relatively clear texts (Dan 12:2-3; Isa 26:19; Job 19:25-27) are accompanied by numerous hints that would eventually

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Books, 1969), 44; Lucas, 302; Segal, *NIDB*, 4: 770. Pope (102) calls this the "standard Old Testament view." While not addressing Job 14:12 at all, the SDA Bible Commentary admits that the details of a corporeal resurrection were not clearly unveiled until the time of Christ. *SDABC*, 3:537.

<sup>21</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 96. See also Arthur S. Peake, "Job's Victory," in *The Dimensions of Job: A Study and Selected Readings*, edited by Nahum Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 201. See also 2 Sam 14:14.

<sup>22</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, translated from the German by D. M. G. Stalker, volume one (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 389; Renan, 119.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Martin-Achard, translated by Terrence Prendergast, "Resurrection (Old Testament)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, volume 5, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 680.

<sup>24</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 96-97.

<sup>25</sup> Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5: 680.

<sup>26</sup> Generally death was not feared. The Old Testament saints were content to go down to the grave as long as three conditions were met: 1) they had had a long and blessed life (Gen 15:15; Exod 20:12; Job 42:10-17), 2) they had left behind many descendants (Gen 15:17-18; 46:3), or at least a son (Deut 25:5-10), and 3) the proper burial rites were carefully observed (Gen 49:29-32; 2 Sam 3:30-39; Jer 16:1-7). Likewise, divine punishment was expressed through a shortened life, a lack of descendants and a corpse abandoned to the wild beasts. See Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5: 680; von Rad, 1: 389-390.

<sup>27</sup> Damsteegt, 353; Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5: 680-681; von Rad, 1: 389.

<sup>28</sup> Renan, 119. Some scholars even argue for the complete absence of Old Testament texts about resurrection. Byron Wheaton, "As It Is Written: Old Testament Foundations for Jesus' Expectation of Resurrection," *Westminster Theological Journal* 70 (2008): 246 and note 4. See also Wendell W. Frerichs, "Death and Resurrection in the Old Testament," *Word and World* 11 (1991): 14, note 2; and John L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974): 307-308.

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blossom into the full-blown confidence in the resurrection expressed by most of First Century Judaism.<sup>29</sup> What is the evidence for resurrection in the Old Testament and how did people come to believe in it?

Explicit OT Texts

The clearest expression<sup>30</sup> of bodily resurrection in the Old Testament is found in an apocalyptic context in Daniel 12:2-3.<sup>31</sup> “Many of those who

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<sup>29</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 85. While post-Old Testament Judaism exhibited dozens of ways to express life after death, bodily resurrection was clearly the standard teaching by the time of Jesus. In fact, the Mishnah (*Sanh.* 10:1) explicitly states (in reaction against the Sadducees) “And these are they that have no share in the world to come: he that says that there is no resurrection of the dead prescribed in the Law. . .” Herbert Danby, editor, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 397. See also Martin-Achard, *ABD* 5: 680; Oepke, *TDNT*, 1:370; Wright, *Resurrection*, 129. For extensive surveys of the intertestamental literature on this subject see George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Resurrection (Early Judaism and Christianity),” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, volume 5, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 685-688 and Wright, *Resurrection*, 129-200.

<sup>30</sup> And generally also considered the latest (see Wright, *Resurrection*, 109).

<sup>31</sup> Brunt, 359-360; Collins, *Hermeneia*, 392, 394; idem, “Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature,” *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature*, Rolf Knierim and Gene M. Tucker, editors, volume 20 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 100; Jacques Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 112-113; Greenberg, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 17: 241; Gerhard F. Hasel, “Resurrection in the Theology of Old Testament Apocalyptic,” *Zeitschrift fuer die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92 (1980):267-284; C. F. Keil, “Ezekiel, Daniel,” in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, volume nine, translated from the German by M. G. Easton and separated into three volumes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 3:480-481; Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:682-683; Nickelsburg, *ABD*, 5:686; Oepke *TDNT*, 1:369-370; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, translated from the German by D. M. G. Stalker, volume two (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 350; Segal, *NIDB*, 4:770; Zdravko Stefanovic, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2007), 436; Wright, *Resurrection*, 109-115. Some would argue that Daniel 12 is the only clear affirmation of a belief in resurrection in the Old Testament. See Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. DiLella, “The Book of Daniel,” *The Anchor Bible*, edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, volume 23 (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 308-309; Lucas, 302; James A. Montgomery, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel,” *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1927), 471.

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sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (ESV).<sup>32</sup> The text goes on to make reference to two resurrections, one “to everlasting life” and the other “to shame and everlasting contempt.” Then in verse 3, referring to the first of the two resurrections, the “wise” shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who bring many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.<sup>33</sup> This prediction of the resurrection is the last in a long line of promises to the people of God in Daniel,<sup>34</sup> promises of a divine kingdom (Dan 2:35, 44-45), stories of vindication in the face of death (Daniel 3 and 6), the vindication of the son of man (Dan 7:13-14), and a Messiah to come (Dan 9:24-27). So deliverance of bodies from death is connected to the vindication of the whole people of God.<sup>35</sup>

It is not immediately clear if the word “many” foresees only a partial resurrection or whether the word is used as an idiom for “all.”<sup>36</sup> But what

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<sup>32</sup> “Sleeping in the dust of the earth” undoubtedly refers to the death of the whole person in Hebrew thinking (on sleep as a metaphor of death see 2 Kings 4:31; Job 3:11-13; 14:10-13; Psa 13:3; Jer 51:35-40, 57; on dust as a destination of the dead see Gen 3:19; Job 10:9; 34:15; Psa 104:29; Eccl 3:13). Thus the metaphor of sleeping and waking refers to the concrete, bodily event of resurrection. See Montgomery, 471; Stefanovic, 436 and the discussion in note 107 of Wright, *Resurrection*, 109.

<sup>33</sup> The imagery of stars seems to have a royal connotation (kings are spoken of as stars or celestial beings— Num 24:17; 1 Sam 29:9; 2 Sam 14:17, 20; Isa 9:6). See also Wright, *Resurrection*, 112 and notes. This is perhaps related to the corporate kingship imagery of Exodus 19 and Revelation 1 and 5. “Stars” are also frequently identified with the angelic host in the Old Testament. John J. Collins, “Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36 (1974): 31-34.

<sup>34</sup> Hasel, 282; Lucas, 303; Wright, *Resurrection*, 114.

<sup>35</sup> The resurrection verses (Dan 12:2-3) are connected in the Hebrew to verse 1, where the deliverance of God’s people is at the center of focus. Verse 2 makes clear that in this text deliverance is not limited to deliverance within this life, but includes also deliverance out of death into the afterlife. C. F. Keil, *Daniel*, 477.

<sup>36</sup> Brunt, 360. The natural meaning of the language is that this text is not referring to a universal resurrection, only some of the dead will arise (see Nickelsburg, *ABD*, 5:686; Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:683). On the other hand, the word “many” is used in both Old and New Testament texts as a reference to the whole (Isa 53:12; Mark 14:24; Rom 5:15). See Stefanovic, 436. Some Adventists, however, have seen in Daniel 12 a reference to a special resurrection of some to be living witnesses to the Second Coming of Jesus. See Hasel, 277-279; F. D. Nichol, editor, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ten volumes (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1955), 4:878; William H. Shea, “Daniel 7-12,” *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier*, edited by George R. Knight (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1996), 215-216; and Ellen G. White, (*The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian*

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will prove particularly significant for this paper is the fact that Daniel 12:2-3 alludes to earlier passages in the Old Testament (such as Isa 26:19;<sup>37</sup> 53:10-12;<sup>38</sup> 65:20-22; and 66:24<sup>39</sup>), putting an inner-biblical, bodily resurrection spin on passages that could be read in other ways.

The second clearest expression of bodily resurrection in the Old Testament can be found in Isaiah 26:19.<sup>40</sup> Isaiah 24-27 exhibits a more apocalyptic style than is generally found in the pre-exilic prophets,

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*Dispensation* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911]), 637: "Graves are opened, and 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth. . . awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' Daniel 12:2. All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. 'They also which pierced Him' (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient." This view of Daniel 12 is supported in some detail by Hartman and DiLella, 307-308. Keil, (*Daniel*, 481-483) offers an interesting middle position.

<sup>37</sup> Allusion confirmed by Collins, *Hermeneia*, 392; Hartman and DiLella, 307; Hasel, 276; Stefanovic, 436; and Wright (*Resurrection*, 116), who notes: "Few doubt that this passage was strongly present to the writer of Daniel 12:2-3."

<sup>38</sup> Allusion confirmed by Collins, *Hermeneia*, 393; idem, *Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, 100; Lucas, 303; Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:683; Ben C. Ollenburger, "If Mortals Die, Will They Live Again?" *Ex Auditu* 9 (1993): 33; Wright, *Resurrection*, 110.

<sup>39</sup> Allusions suggested by Nickelsburg, *ABD*, 5:686, who believes "everlasting life" in Dan 12:2 is a reference to the long life referred to in Isaiah 65:20-22 and "shame and everlasting contempt" is a reference to the fate of the rebels outside Jerusalem in Isaiah 66:14, 24. See also Collins, *Hermeneia*, 393. But the verbal links between the two texts are quite weak, so I doubt an intentional link here. Hartman and DiLella (308) and *SDABC* (4: 878) support an allusion to Isa 66:24.

<sup>40</sup> Brunt, 359-360; F. Delitzsch, "Isaiah," in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, volume seven, translated from the German by James Martin in two volumes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 1: 450-452; Gray, *Isaiah I - XXXIX*, 1: 446-447; Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5: 682; Oepke *TDNT*, 1: 370; Philip Schmitz, "The Grammar of Resurrection in Isaiah 26:19a-c," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122/1 (2003): 145-149; *SDABC*, 4: 204; Wright, *Resurrection*, 116-118. Lucas (302) favors a metaphorical interpretation for this passage, yet believes that bodily resurrection is presumed (304). See also Thomas L. Leclerc, "Resurrection: Biblical Considerations," *Liturgical Ministry* 18 (summer 2009): 98; Segal, *NIDB*, 4:770. Greenberg notes that while Daniel 12 could be read as a very limited resurrection, Isaiah 26 is clearly in the context of world judgment. Greenberg, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 17:241.

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envisioning the renewal of the whole cosmos.<sup>41</sup> The section is a mixture of doom and lament, on the one hand, and expressions of trust and praise on the other. The hope expressed in 26:19 is anticipated first in Isaiah 25:7-8 (NIV) where the Lord Almighty “will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;<sup>42</sup> he will swallow up death forever.”<sup>43</sup> The context of 26:19 is set in verses 13-15,<sup>44</sup> where the enemies of God’s people are now dead in the complete and endless sense. But in contrast to these (Isa 26:19, NIV), “Your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy.”<sup>45</sup> A resurrection of the body is clearly in view here, but there is no reference to a resurrection of the wicked.<sup>46</sup> Also significant for our purpose is that Isa 26:19 evokes the language of earlier, more ambiguous Old Testament texts like Hosea 6:1-3.<sup>47</sup>

The third Old Testament text widely considered an explicit description of bodily resurrection is also the most controversial of the three; Job 19:25-27.<sup>48</sup> While there are difficulties in this passage, Brunt believes that the

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<sup>41</sup> Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:682; Wright, *Resurrection*, 117.

<sup>42</sup> The Hebrew word translated “shroud” and “sheet” in this text has connotations of burial clothes (Job 40:13), so the language of the whole passage suggests a reversal of death, the great enemy of all humanity.

<sup>43</sup> See Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 439-440; Gray, *Isaiah I-XXXIX*, 1: 429-430; Ollenburger, 38-40; *SDABC*, 4:201.

<sup>44</sup> Brunt, 359; Collins, *Hermeneia*, 395; Wright, *Resurrection*, 117.

<sup>45</sup> Brunt, 359; Hasel, 273.

<sup>46</sup> Brunt, 360; Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:682. There is a detailed discussion in Hasel (272-276) regarding who the speaker in Isaiah 26:19 is, and also who is being addressed, but that goes beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>47</sup> Allusion confirmed by C. F. Keil, “Minor Prophets,” in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, volume ten, translated from the German by James Martin in two volumes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 1: 95; Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:682.

<sup>48</sup> Driver and Grey (*Job*, 171) call the manuscript evidence for Job 19:25-27 “corrupt and obscure” and “more ambiguous than could have been desired.” Pope (135) says that the ancient versions all differ and no reliance can be placed on any of them. He does not see in them a witness to bodily resurrection. Anderson. *Job* (193), says that several lines are “so unintelligible that the range of translations offered is quite bewildering.” For a sample of a dozen or so translations in German, English and French see H. H. Rowley, “The Book of Job and its Meaning,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 41 (1958), note 5, running from 203-205. On the other hand, early Christian students of the Hebrew text like Jerome were confident that the text expressed the hope and reality of bodily resurrection. See Glatzer,

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conviction of life after death is clear.<sup>49</sup> Job expresses confidence that God will be his *go'el* in the last days (19:25). What this means is expressed in verse 26, the challenging Hebrew of which is translated by the ESV: “And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God.”<sup>50</sup> In the context, Job can find no justice and all his friends and family have deserted him. But in verse 25 the mood changes and Job expresses

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Introduction, 27. And Anderson, *Job* (193), goes on to point out that we must not let the ambiguities in the text hide the fact that some things in the text are clear. See also Lucas, 302-303.

<sup>49</sup> Brunt, 359. Though conservative in his leanings, Wright (*Resurrection*, 97-98; see also Delitzsch, *Job*, 356-372) emphatically differs with regard to Job 19. He argues that the passage is a clearer reference to resurrection in some English translations than in the Hebrew. Job has earlier expressed the conviction that life is a breath, that the dead will not come up out of *Sheol* (Job 7:7-10), that they do not rise again as long as the cosmos exists (Job 14:1-14). Why should Job suddenly be singing a different tune? I would point out, however, that there is a progression in Job from hopeless doubt to trust in God, and the very expressions of hopelessness in chapters 7 and 14 set the table for the hope that is expressed in chapter 19. In Job 19:25 (masked by most English translations) the word for earth (אֶרֶץ) is actually “dust of the earth,” the very word used in key texts like Gen 2:7; 3:19; Isa 26:19 and Dan 12:2. So the context of verse 26 is God standing on the “dust of the earth” to vindicate His servant. Not only so, but in chapter 20 (as admitted by Wright, *Resurrection*, 98) Zophar reaffirms the traditional view of death and resurrection by way of rebuke to Job (see 20:2-9): “My troubled thoughts prompt me to answer because I am greatly disturbed. . . . Surely you know how it has been from of old, ever since man was placed on the earth, . . . he will perish forever, like his own dung; those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’ Like a dream he flies away, no more to be found, banished like a vision of the night. The eye that saw him will not see him again; his place will look on him no more.” So I would place the weight of evidence in favor of a reference to bodily resurrection in Job 19:25-27. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* confidently asserts that verse 25 is “an unmistakable glimpse of the resurrection.” See Jacques Doukhan, “Radioscopy of a Resurrection: The Meaning of *niqq'pu zo't* in Job 19:26,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34:2 (Autumn 1996):187-193; *SDABC*, 3:549.

<sup>50</sup> According to Anderson, *Job* (193), the reference here to skin, flesh and eyes makes it clear that Job expects to have this experience in the body, not as some disembodied “shade.” The problem in verse 26 is the Hebrew preposition *min* (מִן), which is united to the Hebrew word for flesh (*basar*—בָּשָׂר). *Min* in this context can express removal, separation or location. So possible translations include “in my flesh,” “apart from my flesh,” “away from my flesh,” or “from my flesh,” the choice makes a huge impact on the meaning of the verse as a whole. If one translates “in my flesh” or “from my flesh” the text supports bodily resurrection. If one translates “apart from my flesh” or “away from my flesh,” it could imply apart from the corruptible, mortal flesh in a new body like the one in 1 Corinthians 15. Either way, bodily resurrection is not denied in Job 19. See *SDABC*, 3:549-550.

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confidence that his *go'el* will one day vindicate him.<sup>51</sup> Such a vindication requires a judgment and a bodily resurrection, so in spite of translational challenges, it seems likely that bodily resurrection is in view in Job 19,<sup>52</sup> although the word explicit is probably a stretch when applied to this passage.

Harbingers of the Resurrection in the Old Testament

In addition to the more explicit texts on bodily resurrection in the Old Testament, there are a number of texts that offer intriguing hints of what would become the standard understanding within early Judaism and Christianity.<sup>53</sup> The two most intriguing of these are found in Isaiah 53 and Ezekiel 37. I will begin with Ezekiel 37.

In Ezekiel 37 God's ability to restore life is applied to the nation as a whole, in keeping with the community-oriented worldview of the Old Testament.<sup>54</sup> The prophet sees a valley full of dry bones.<sup>55</sup> He prophesies to the bones and they come together, life is breathed into them and they live

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<sup>51</sup> Driver and Grey (172-174) are convinced that the text of verses 23 and 26 requires that Job will have some conscious sense of God's vindication after his death, although the fullness of bodily resurrection is not directly expressed, it is certainly implied. Charles Bruston ("Pour l'exegese de Job," *Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 26 (1906): 143-146) takes the opposite position based on the same evidence, so not all will be convinced that Job 19 is a clear statement of bodily resurrection. Renan (119) takes a middle position: Job normally holds the standard Old Testament view of death, but in Job 19 catches a flash or intuition of something more beyond. Rowley seems to take a similar position. See H. H. Rowley, "The Intellectual versus the Spiritual Solution," in Nahum Glatzer, *The Dimensions of Job: A Study and Selected Readings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 126-127.

<sup>52</sup> See the strong confirmation of this viewpoint in Anderson, *Job*, 194. But see also the extensive rejection of such a viewpoint in John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, volume eight (n. p.: Harper and Brothers, 1879), 1053.

<sup>53</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 85-128 offers a thorough summary of most of these.

<sup>54</sup> Brunt, 358. Wright (*Resurrection*, 119) considers Ezekiel 37 the most famous of all Old Testament resurrection passages and also the most obviously metaphorical. See also Lucas, 302.

<sup>55</sup> Corpses and bones are highly unclean objects to the observant Jew. This is the state to which Israel has been reduced in the eyes of God. See Wright, *Resurrection*, 119.

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again (Eze 37:1-10).<sup>56</sup> In verse 11 the vision is interpreted as a metaphor of Israel's restoration after the Exile. But the repeated use of the word "grave" (קִבְרָה) in verses 12 and 13 suggests to some that the text goes beyond return from Exile to the resurrection of individuals within the nation who have died.<sup>57</sup> At the least, this text shows that the idea of resurrection was not unfamiliar to Israel, even if it was rarely expressed in explicit terms.<sup>58</sup>

Isaiah 53 is one of several "Servant Songs" in the latter part of Isaiah.<sup>59</sup> It is not always clear whether these songs are a metaphor of the suffering of Israel as a community in the future or a reference to one who suffers in their behalf.<sup>60</sup> As we have seen with Ezekiel 37, the language of death and bodily resurrection can be used as a metaphor for the exile and return of the

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<sup>56</sup> Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:682-3 sees the language here as grounded in the creation language of Genesis 2:7; Isaiah 42:5; and Psalm 104:29-30, echoed also in Job 33:4. Just as in creation, Adam was made in two stages, so here the resurrection would take place in two stages, the gathering of bones and construction of flesh first, then the breath of life comes into the reconstituted bodies. So Ezekiel 37 functions as a renewal of creation. See Keil, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, 2:118-119; Wright, *Resurrection*, 121. Moshe Greenberg affirms the connection between Ezekiel 37 and Genesis 2:7 ("Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary," *The Anchor Bible*, edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, volume 22A [New York: Doubleday, 1997], 741).

<sup>57</sup> Brunt, 358; Keil, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, 2:120-128. But see the counterpoint of Martin-Achard in *ABD*, 5: 681-682 and also G. A. Cooke, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel," *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), 400; Segal, *NIDB*, 4:770; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, translated by James D. Martin, in *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, edited by Frank Moore Cross (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 262-265. On the other hand, in the early rabbinic period Ezekiel 37 was seen as a prediction of physical resurrection. See Wright, *Resurrection*, 120-121. Greenberg (749-751) reviews Jewish and Christian interpretation of this passage in relation to bodily resurrection. Greenberg himself seems to lean toward the metaphorical interpretation (750).

<sup>58</sup> Brunt, 358; Leclerc, 100; Lucas, 304; Ollenburger, 37. This passage clearly asserts that Yahweh has sufficient power to accomplish anything that He promises to His people. See Keil, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, 2: 116.

<sup>59</sup> Isaiah 53, in fact, begins with 52:13. There is a break between verses 12 and 13 and the material flows naturally from 52:15 on into 53:1. See John McKenzie, "Second Isaiah: Introduction, Translation and Notes," *The Anchor Bible*, edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 129-131; *SDABC*, 4:288.

<sup>60</sup> Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:682; McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 132.

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whole nation.<sup>61</sup> But Isaiah 53:7-12 seems to imply more than that.<sup>62</sup> While there is no explicit mention of resurrection itself, verses 7-9 indicate that the servant dies and is buried and verses 10-12 indicate that he afterward emerges in triumph.<sup>63</sup> So the early Christian application of Isaiah 53 to the death and resurrection of Jesus was exegetically defensible. But more than this, numerous allusions to Isaiah 53 in Daniel 12:2-3 provide evidence that long before the time of Jesus, some Jews at least saw in Isaiah 53 a forecast of resurrection.<sup>64</sup> In Isaiah 53 belief that Israel's God will restore the nation after the exile becomes belief that He will restore the nation's representative after death.<sup>65</sup> So Isaiah 53 seems to provide a transition between national and bodily restoration.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2:303-304.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 322-342; Lucas, 303 *SDABC*, 4 291-292.

<sup>63</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 116. Verses 7-12 contain numerous words that refer to death. Verse 7 speaks of "slaughter" (שָׁחַת), a word used for the death of people in Isa 34:2. In verse 8 the servant is "cut off (נִגְזַר) from the land of the living." Then in verse 9 the text contains the language of "grave" (קֶבֶר) and "death" (מָוֶת). Even in verse 10 it refers to the life of the servant as a "guilt offering" (זֶבַח אֲשָׁמָה), and verse 12 repeats the reference to death (מָוֶת). So if the servant of Isaiah 53 is an individual, there is no question that he dies, is buried and is then exalted in triumph. See also Martin Luther, "Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 40-66," in *Luther's Works*, edited by Hilton C. Oswald, volume 17 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 227-232; McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 135-136.

<sup>64</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 115-116. The "wise" of Daniel 12:3 seem to be a plural version of the servant who "deals wisely" in Isaiah 52:13. They "turn many to righteousness," the servant of Isaiah 53:11 "will justify many." The shining of the wise in Daniel 12:3 may also reflect the light featured in Isaiah 53:11 in the Hebrew manuscripts at Qumran and also the LXX (φῶς). Wright also notes a strong thematic parallel between the suffering and redemption of the wise in Daniel (Dan 12:2-3, cf. 11:33-35; 12:1) and that of the servant in Isaiah 53.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 123. See also 128: "The national element in this hope is never abandoned. The promise remains. But out of that promise there has grown something new."

<sup>66</sup> Delitzsch (*Isaiah*, 2: 302), however, does suggest that the individual reading of Isaiah 53 is grounded in multiple earlier references in Isaiah.

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Hosea, one of the two earliest writing prophets,<sup>67</sup> has a couple of intriguing hints of resurrection. Hosea 13:14 (ESV), speaking of Ephraim (northern Israel) asks, “Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?” The thrust of the Hebrew is actually a denial that God will raise the northern kingdom of Israel from death, but the LXX and the New Testament (1 Cor 15:54-55) take the passage in a positive sense.<sup>68</sup> John Day has persuasively demonstrated that Isaiah 26:19, a fairly plain resurrection text, clearly alludes to Hosea 13:14.<sup>69</sup>

The second hint is in Hosea 6:1-3.<sup>70</sup> The idea of bringing to life (חַיָּה) on the third day is echoed in later passages, such as 1 Corinthians 15:4.<sup>71</sup> It may also have been in the mind of Daniel when he wrote his resurrection passage in Daniel 12.<sup>72</sup> That the bringing to life is preceded by a “striking down” (נָקָה) is resurrection language.<sup>73</sup> While in its original context Hosea 6:1-3 is probably mocking an inadequate prayer based on Canaanite

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<sup>67</sup> C. L. Seow, “Book of Hosea,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, six volumes, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:291; J. D. Smart, “Hosea (Man and Book),” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, five volumes, edited by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2: 648. Hosea’s ministry took place on either side of about 740 B.C. See Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, “Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” *The Anchor Bible*, edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, volume 24 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 33-35 and William Rainey Harper, “A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea,” *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1905), cxli.

<sup>68</sup> Harper, 404; *SDABC*, 4:931; Wright, *Resurrection*, 118.

<sup>69</sup> John Day, “The Development of Belief in Life After Death in Ancient Israel,” in *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason*, edited by J. Barton and D. J. Reimer (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 244-245. Some eight different features of the texts and contexts of Isaiah 26:19 and Hosea 13:14 can be paralleled.

<sup>70</sup> “Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured (נִכְחַ) us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; **on the third day he will restore us**, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; **he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.**” (NIV)

<sup>71</sup> “He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

<sup>72</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 119.

<sup>73</sup> Clearly affirmed by Anderson and Freedman, 419-422; Wright, *Resurrection*, 118. This is also supported by the connection between the language of this passage and Deut 32:39. See Anderson and Freedman, 419; Keil, *Minor Prophets*, 94.

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religious expectations,<sup>74</sup> both Hosea 6 and 13 demonstrate that the idea of resurrection was clearly present in Israel as early as the eighth century.<sup>75</sup>

There are other intimations of resurrection in the Old Testament.<sup>76</sup> There are several accounts of bodily resurrection in the stories related to Elijah and Elisha.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps these incidents inspired the language found in Hosea, written to the same area less than a hundred years later. There are also the unusual stories of Enoch and Elijah, who took a different route to immortality than by death.<sup>78</sup> There are frequent expressions of hope that

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<sup>74</sup> The prayer of 6:1-3 is from the people of Ephraim to God and sounds impressive when read in isolation. But note the harsh condemnations directed by God to “Ephraim” immediately before and after the prayer in Hosea 5:14-15 and 6:4-11. Whatever its source, the prayer is clearly an inadequate response to the prophet’s message and is probably more metaphorical in intent than physical. See Harper, 281-284; Lucas, 302. But see also Keil (*Minor Prophets*, 94) who argues that these words are a call addressed by the prophet to the people in the name of the Lord. But while Keil takes the passage in a positive way, he does not see it in terms of bodily resurrection but rather in terms of the spiritual and moral restoration of Israel as a people (96).

<sup>75</sup> Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:681.

<sup>76</sup> While generally skeptical about the clarity of resurrection in the Old Testament, Lucas (302) does suggest that in several texts the Psalmists’ relationship with God is so deep that it will somehow not be ended by death (Psalm 16:9-11; 73:23-26; 49:15). These texts seem worthy of further exploration even though most OT scholars do not mention them in this context.

<sup>77</sup> 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:31-37 and 13:20-21. See C. F. Keil, *The Books of Kings*, in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, edited by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, volume three, translated from the German by James Martin in three volumes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 1:239-240; 313-314; 378-379; Martin-Achard, 5: 681; James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Books of Kings*, edited by Henry Snyder Gehman, in *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1951), 295-296; 369; 435-436; F. D. Nichol, editor, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ten volumes (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), 2:814-815; 870-871; 929; Oepke, TDNT, 1:369; Wright, *Resurrection*, 74, note 234. One could argue that these are not significant to the topic, since they are not used within Israel as examples of what can happen to all at the end of time. They are also more like resuscitations of people who will die again, they are not raised to immortal, bodily life. See Wright, *Resurrection*, 96.

<sup>78</sup> Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:1-15. The Enoch reference is in the midst of a genealogy in which it is said of others, “and he died,” but of Enoch “God took him.” See Keil, *The Books of Kings*, 1:294-297; Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5: 681; Montgomery, *The Books of Kings*, 353; *SDABC*, 2:852; Alan F. Segal, “Resurrection, OT,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, volume 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 769; Wright, *Resurrection*, 94-96. Von Rad (1:406) clearly understands the Enoch

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there might be a deliverance from *Sheol*.<sup>79</sup> And the Torah itself was later understood to offer a number of harbingers of the resurrection.<sup>80</sup> So from our perspective, at least, the Old Testament picture was not as bleak as it may seem at first glance.

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and Elijah texts as expressing translation into Yahweh's other realms beyond this life. While Cogan and Tadmor do not consider the story historical, they do concede that the intention is to describe an ascension into heaven. See Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, volume 11 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 32-33. Skinner notes that while the Enoch narrative clearly expresses a bypassing of the normal process of death, it was not presumed to relate to the destiny of ordinary mortals, it was an extraordinary circumstance. See John Skinner, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis," *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1910), 131-132.

There is less clarity within the Old Testament regarding the fate of Moses (Deut 34:5-6), who is later thought to have been translated after death (Jude 7) and also appeared with Elijah and Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration (Matt 17:1-13; Mark 9:1-13; Luke 9:27-36).

<sup>79</sup> 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kgs 5:7; Job 33:15-30; Psalm 16:8-11; 22:15-31; 104:29-30. The challenge with many of these texts is determining whether they refer to a deliverance that lies beyond *Sheol*; in other words, a bodily resurrection after death, or if they refer to a deliverance from death within this life; prolonging life to a good old age rather than dying in one's prime. See Mitchell Dahood, "Psalms I: 1-50: Introduction, Translation and Notes," *The Anchor Bible*, edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, volume 16 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 91; F. Delitzsch, "Psalms," in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, volume five, translated from the German by Francis Bolton in three volumes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1973), 1: 228; Driver and Gray, *Job*, 290; Greenberg, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 17: 240; Segal, *NIDB*, 4:780-781; Gregory V. Trull, "An Exegesis of Psalm 16:10," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (July-September 2004): 304-321; Wright, *Resurrection*, 103-105. Briggs and Briggs offer a third option, the text moves beyond death, but promises "God's presence and favor" with the Psalmist in *Sheol* itself, or the replacement of the dead with newly created individuals. See Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Psalms*, two volumes, *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1906), 1: 121-122; 2:336-337.

<sup>80</sup> The best known of these, of course, is the statement of Jesus that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the God of the living, not the dead (Matt 22:31-32). But there are many other texts in the Pentateuch that were seen as intimating resurrection in the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud* (Num 15:31; 18:28; Deut 11:9; 31:16; 32:39; 33:6). Most of these references are found in *Sanhedrin*, 90-92 and are exegeted briefly in Wright, *Resurrection*, 197-198.

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The Path to Resurrection

This survey of the Old Testament data raises the historical question of where resurrection came from within Israel. We have seen that explicit references to resurrection are rare and most of the implicit ones can be understood as metaphors of the community's return from exile and disgrace. When and why did God begin to turn Israel's eyes from the hope of national resurrection to an individual hope in the resurrection of the body?

The consensus among scholars who take a naturalistic,<sup>81</sup> developmental approach to the Old Testament is to see this shift as fairly late. They understand Job 19 to be written not by Moses, but during or after the Exile.<sup>82</sup> They consider Job, in any case, to be ambiguous at best regarding bodily resurrection. They also date Daniel and the Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 24-27) as second and third century BC insertions into the canon of the Old Testament.<sup>83</sup> So in the critical consensus, belief in bodily resurrection was a late development in Israel, clearly witnessed only centuries after the Exile.

Given these critical assumptions, it is often assumed that the belief in bodily resurrection arose among Israelites around or after their exposure to Zoroastrianism in the Persian court.<sup>84</sup> But the popularity of this view has

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<sup>81</sup> By naturalistic I mean an approach to Scripture which ignores or denies supernatural intervention in history or in the development of the biblical canon. In such an approach, shifts in biblical thinking over time are not due to divine revelation, but to natural cause and effect triggered by cultural and philosophical developments in the Israelite environment.

<sup>82</sup> James L. Crenshaw, "Book of Job," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, six volumes, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3: 863.

<sup>83</sup> John J. Collins, "Book of Daniel," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, six volumes, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:29-30; Gray, *Isaiah* (399-400) asserts that Isaiah 24-27 is much closer to Daniel (Second Century B.C. in his mind) than to Ezekiel (Sixth Century B.C.). But many critical scholars place Isaiah 24-27 as early as the Exile. See William R. Millar, "Isaiah 24-27 (Little Apocalypse)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, six volumes, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3: 489.

<sup>84</sup> Oepke, *TDNT*, 1: 369. While Zoroaster himself may have lived much earlier, Zoroastrianism was introduced to general consciousness during the Persian period when it became the official religion of the Persian Empire. From there it is assumed that it crept into the relatively late Jewish documents such as Daniel and Isaiah. See Mary Boyce, "Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, six volumes, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:1168-1174.

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waned considerably among scholars.<sup>85</sup> First of all, as we have seen, the language of resurrection is echoed not only in Ezekiel 37, but all the way back to Hosea, in the eighth century BC. And Ezekiel's story of the dead rising from their graves cannot be related to Zoroastrianism, since the Persians exposed their dead rather than burying them.<sup>86</sup> And the emerging Israelite belief in resurrection is anything but dualistic, a core characteristic of Zoroastrianism.

More recently it has become fashionable to see the emerging Israelite belief in resurrection as grounded in the dying and rising Baal of Canaanite mythology.<sup>87</sup> While this approach is more plausible in terms of its historical progression, it is also unlikely to be the primary explanation of Israel's emerging belief in the resurrection.<sup>88</sup> For one thing, there is no reason to believe the Canaanites ever applied the resurrection of their god to themselves. And it is also questionable in light of the larger picture of the Exile. If Israel's exile was a consequence of its compromise with pagan gods and their nature religions, why would the prophets who promised a return borrow their central imagery from those same religions?

If one accepts the biblical chronology of Daniel and Isaiah at face value, a different trajectory begins to emerge. With Hosea the seeds of resurrection, buried long before in the Pentateuch, begin to emerge as metaphors of Israel's rebirth as a people.<sup>89</sup> With the Isaiah Apocalypse

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<sup>85</sup> See Collins, *Hermeneia*, 396; Hartman and DiLella, 308; Wright, *Resurrection*, 124-125.

<sup>86</sup> Collins (*Hermeneia*, 396) sees no Persian motifs in Daniel 12 either.

<sup>87</sup> See in particular John Day, "The Development of Belief in Life After Death in Ancient Israel," 245-248; idem, "Resurrection Imagery from Baal to the Book of Daniel," in *Congress Volume: Cambridge 1995*, edited by J. A. Emerton, *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 66 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 125-133.

<sup>88</sup> See Wright, *Resurrection*, 126-127.

<sup>89</sup> Note the remarkable statement by Anderson and Freedman (420): "Hosea reflects the adaptation of individual physical death and resurrection to the experience of the nation, and thus is figurative. The underlying picture, while deriving from the realm of sickness and severe injury, and associated with it, must also embrace the notion of real death and real revivification. Most scholars find a doctrine of death and resurrection of people at this stage in Israel's thought too advanced. Recent research on the belief of early Israelites in personal survival after physical death has weakened this approach."

As mentioned earlier, these texts may have taken their cue from the three resuscitations recorded in the Elijah and Elisha stories of the historical books. 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:31-37 and 13:20-21. See Martin-Achard, 5:681; Oepke, *TDNT*, 1:369; Wright,

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(Isaiah 24-27), bodily resurrection, hinted at also in Isaiah 53, takes explicit form. During the Exile itself, Daniel and Ezekiel apply resurrection language not only the return of the nation but also to the return from the grave of at least some of those who have died in the past. In such a trajectory, it is more likely that Zoroaster picked up the idea of resurrection from Daniel than the other way around.

If bodily resurrection is a plausible development within the evidence of the Old Testament itself,<sup>90</sup> what were the factors that led to that development? I believe there are several, which I will summarize here. First, is the belief in creation.<sup>91</sup> If God is the ultimate source of physical life, it is perhaps inevitable that people would come to believe that the same God is powerful enough to both end life and restore it (Deut 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6).<sup>92</sup> He created and thus He can re-create.<sup>93</sup> And indeed, some of the resurrection texts we have explored contain strong echoes of the Genesis creation narratives.<sup>94</sup> In those narratives, Yahweh created the first human from the dust, breathing into Adam His own breath (Gen 2:7). This language is then echoed in relation to death in Genesis 3:19; when God takes His breath away, humanity returns to the dust once more.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, in Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden, we see a first intimation of Israel's future exile. So the fate of the nation and the body are linked together in the original narrative of creation.<sup>96</sup>

A second root of resurrection belief lay in the promises of God's love (אהבה) and faithfulness (אמונה) to Israel.<sup>97</sup> If God's love and faithfulness are only for this life, they are truly steadfast in only a limited sense. Victory

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*Resurrection*, 74, note 234.

<sup>90</sup> Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:684.

<sup>91</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 127.

<sup>92</sup> Brunt, 358; Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:684; Nickelsburg, *ABD*, 5:685; Wright, *Resurrection*, 139.

<sup>93</sup> "Belief in the resurrection concerns the capacity of God. Immortality, on the other hand, is our weak claim to autonomous significance." Walter Brueggemann, "Ultimate Victory: Jesus and Resurrection," *Christian Century* 124, no. 3 (February 6, 2007), 33. In other words, resurrection puts the focus on God while immortality puts the focus on us. See also Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:684 and 2 Macc 7:22-23, 28-29.

<sup>94</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 122-123.

<sup>95</sup> See also Psa 7:5; 22:15, 29; 30:9; 104:29; 119:25; 146:4; Eccl 12:7.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

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over death provided Israel's God the ultimate way to demonstrate his faithfulness and love toward His own people.<sup>98</sup> A personal experience with the steadfast love of Israel's God led to the conviction that His faithfulness would be known, not only in the present, but also beyond the grave.<sup>99</sup> There Israel's relationship with God would continue.<sup>100</sup>

Resurrection belief within Israel is also rooted in the justice of God combined with His sovereign power.<sup>101</sup> As the almighty Judge, God rewards the faithful and punishes those who rebel against His covenant commandments.<sup>102</sup> A God of justice would not forever leave Israel to suffer oppression from the pagans.<sup>103</sup> But that kind of justice was less and less seen as Israel's history went on. It became clear that if there is no resurrection and no judgment, there is no justice in this world, therefore, a future bodily resurrection is required for justice to occur. It is precisely the resurrection that allows God to fully demonstrate his faithfulness toward His people.<sup>104</sup> God's justice is seen first in the national resurrection of the people, and ultimately in the bodily resurrection of the individuals that made up that people.<sup>105</sup>

The fourth root of resurrection belief lay in Israel's belief in the wholeness of human beings, the idea that body and soul are a single, indivisible unit.<sup>106</sup> This wholistic perspective is revealed in Genesis 2:7, where the living soul represents the whole being, including the body. According to Brunt, the Old Testament view of death grows out of this

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<sup>98</sup> Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5: 684. It is in the resurrection that Israel received the ultimate answer to the questions of the Psalmists about the future quality of God's love and faithfulness (Psalms 6, 16, 22, etc.).

<sup>99</sup> Collins (Hermeneia, 394) particularly note Psa 73:23-26 and 16:9-10 in this regard.

<sup>100</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 103.

<sup>101</sup> Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:684; Wright, *Resurrection*, 139. See 2 Macc 7:9.

<sup>102</sup> Nickelsburg, *ABD*, 5:685.

<sup>103</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 202.

<sup>104</sup> Martin-Achard, *ABD*, 5:684.

<sup>105</sup> Brunt, 358.

<sup>106</sup> Daniel Boyarin and Seymour Siegel, "Resurrection in the Rabbinic Period," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, edited by Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, volume 17 (Detroit, MI: Thomson-Gale, 2007), 241; Leclerc, 98.

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wholistic understanding.<sup>107</sup> If it is the whole person that dies, then any hope for an afterlife must include a restoration of the physical body.<sup>108</sup>

The final root of resurrection belief lay, of course, in the promise of national restoration at the other side of the exile.<sup>109</sup> In passages such as Isaiah 53 and Ezekiel 37, as we have seen, the two restorations are so completely mingled that it is hard to tell them apart. As hope for Israel's national restoration began to fade with the Persian and Greek occupations after the Exile, bodily resurrection became more and more the focus of the remnant of ancient Israel.<sup>110</sup>

Given the theological perspective just outlined, why is the Old Testament so implicit about the resurrection? Brunt argues that the Old Testament writers could not point back to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the foundation of their hope for the future.<sup>111</sup> Their thought world was oriented to the community rather than the individual. So it is to the social

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<sup>107</sup> Brunt, 358.

<sup>108</sup> Recently Francois Bovon protested against the current tendency of biblical scholars toward what he called "inflation of the body" and a fixed commitment to the "unity of the human person as the core of biblical anthropology." He feels that this doctrine of wholeness encourages the absence of the divine in an outrageously secular society. His protest, however, ignores the monumental work of N. T. Wright (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*) as well as the vast body of evidence from the Old Testament and the ancient Near East. See Francois Bovon, "The Soul's Comeback: Immortality and Resurrection in Early Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 103:4 (October 2010): 401.

<sup>109</sup> Collins, *Hermeneia*, 395; Wright, *Resurrection*, 93.

<sup>110</sup> An interesting feature of this trajectory is that the more Greek the ancient Bible is, the more personal resurrection one finds in it. See Wright, *Resurrection*, 147-150. In the LXX the Old Testament passages that speak unambiguously of resurrection come through loud and clear, there is no attempt to soften them in any way. When it comes to Job 19, Hosea 6 and Hosea 13, the LXX translator had no doubt at all about bodily resurrection and made sure that the Greek translation of these texts affirmed it without question. For example, in Hosea 13:14, the translator takes the rhetorical question "shall I redeem them from death?" with the expected answer being "no," and turns it into a straightforward statement, "I will redeem them from death." In Job 14:14, the translator turns "if a man die shall he live again?" into "if a man dies, he shall live." It is interesting that the LXX is a Greek translation of a Hebrew text in ancient Egypt, a philosophical home of bodiless afterlife. One might expect that every Old Testament reference to resurrection would be altered into something more Platonic and immaterial. But that is not what happened. Instead Hellenistic Jews saw bodily resurrection in places less than clear in the Hebrew Old Testament itself.

<sup>111</sup> Brunt, 357. Brunt also makes the point (360) that while resurrection is less explicit in the Old Testament than in the New, it is theologically consistent with what the New Testament teaches.

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unit and its survival that the emphasis of God's revelation to them is placed.<sup>112</sup> But individual and national restoration are not an either/or in the Old Testament.<sup>113</sup> Many seeds of both the Messiah and the future understanding of resurrection are planted in the Old Testament, to bear fruit once the messianic promises of God were fulfilled.

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<sup>112</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 99-103, 127. Wright notes that in Genesis 3 the future hope is couched in terms of child-bearing and that the future of the land is a central theme throughout the OT. This community focus is crucial also to the remnant theme in the Old Testament, which is grounded on the survival of the people in the face of destructive threats that could destroy the whole nation's future. See Tarsee Li, "The Remnant in the Old Testament," 23-25 and Angel Manuel Rodriguez, "Concluding Essay: God's End-Time Remnant and the Christian Church," 201-202, in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, edited by Angel Manuel Rodriguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology, volume one (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009).

<sup>113</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 116. Resurrection becomes a primary metaphor for the return in Psalm 16, 49, 73; Isaiah 24-27, 52-53, 66; and Ezekiel 37. See Nickelsburg, *ABD*, 5:685.