

| PORTION  | DATE         | HEB DATE       | TORAH         | NEVIIM  | KETUVIM        |
|----------|--------------|----------------|---------------|---|----------------|
| Ha'azinu | 26 Sep. 2020 | 8 Tishrei 5781 | Deut. 32:1-52 | Hos. 14:1-9;<br>Mic. 7:18-20;<br>Joel 2:15-27 | Matt. 18:21-35 |

In this week's Torah portion, Ha'azinu is a song that contains prophetic messages of what was, what is, and what will be. It is a song that Moshe exhorts Yisrael to remember the Exodus and follow the Torah or incur punishment, and a promise of future redemption. It is written (Deut. 32:39), "See now that I, I am He, And there is no Elohim besides Me. I put to death and I make alive. I have wounded, and I heal. And from My hand no one delivers!" The Talmud concludes that this verse implies a physical revival after death. Hashem first says "I kill," then "I give life", which is not the sequence of events we witness; especially given that the words "wound" and "heal" are in the proper sequence: the sages<sup>1</sup> taught: [Hashem said] "I kill and I give life." One might have thought that this refers to death for one person and life [meaning birth], for another person, in the typical manner the world operates. [However,] the verse adds: "I have wounded and I will heal." Just as the wounding and the healing [clearly] refer to the same person, so too death and life refer to the same person. This verse refutes those who say that there is no Torah source for the resurrection of the dead.

What happens after life is not revealed in the Torah itself. The dead go to "Sheol," a mysterious, ill-defined place. This leaves room for a wide variety of theories. In the rest of the Tanach, there are more explicit hints at resurrection. Hannah, Samuel's mother, in her prayer of thanksgiving, uses the same language as our portion (1Sam. 2:6), "YHWH puts to death and makes alive, He brings down to the grave and raises up." Isaiah tells Hashem: "Let Your dead live, together with my dead body, let them arise!" (Isa. 26:19) In addition, there are three specific examples of resurrection in Tanach: First, the prophet Elijah prays for YHWH to resurrect a young boy, and Hashem does so: 1Kings 17:17-24; Second, the prophet Elisha revives the son of the Shunammite woman, a child whose birth he had foretold (2 Kings 4:8-16); 2Kings 4:32-37; Third, a dead man is thrown into Elisha's grave, and he is revived when his body touches Elisha's bones (2Kings 13:21). Yeshua raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38:44). Elsewhere, Widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-17); Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:49-56); Acts 9:36-42; Acts 20:7-12, and of course, the resurrection of our Messiah, Yeshua.

One can argue that these prophets knew how to revive someone who had just died, something modern surgeons frequently do. There is even a hint of cardiopulmonary and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. The Talmud<sup>2</sup> sees more proof in the tense of verbs: In Psalms, the first line of Ashrei says: Happy are those who dwell in Your house!" (Psa. 84:5) They shall praise You yet again." The sages asked: Why "They shall praise you yet again" instead of just "they praise you?" Because it alludes to the future, after resurrection, when they will praise Hashem again! It means, "Just as they praised You in this world, so they shall praise You in the World to Come.

In Exodus, it says: "Then Moshe and the children of Yisrael will sing this song to Hashem." (Exo. 15:1). It is not stated "sang" but "will sing" [implying Moshe will be revived and sing the song in the future.] In Joshua, it says: "Then Joshua will build an altar to the Lord... of Israel on Mount Eibal." (Josh. 8:30) It is not stated "built" but "will build" [implying that Joshua will be revived. In Talmudic times, Sadducees and

<sup>1</sup> BT, Pesachim 68a; Sanhedrin 91b

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Sanhedrin 91b

Samaritans rejected the notion of the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees defended it passionately, arguing it was part of the Oral Law. They won out, and now it is mainline Jewish teaching.

All rabbis agreed on the existence of a “World to Come”, on the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead when the Messiah arrives. Who would not be in a World to Come? The Mishnah says: These are those who have no portion in the World to Come: He who maintains that resurrection is not a biblical doctrine, that the Torah was not divinely revealed, and an Epicurean [who encourages people to seek out only the pleasures of this world.]<sup>3</sup> This means that if you don’t believe in it, that is, the resurrection, you won’t get it. Does your belief cause its existence?

The second of the nineteen blessings in the Amidah is simply: Blessed are You, O YHWH, who revives the dead. The morning prayer, extracted from the Talmud<sup>4</sup> reads: My Elohim, the soul that You gave me is pure. You created it, You fashioned it, You breathed it into me. You preserve it within me, and You will take it from me, but You will restore it to me hereafter. These beliefs are codified in Maimonides’ “thirteen principles of faith”. The 12<sup>th</sup> says that the Messiah will come and the 13<sup>th</sup> says that Hashem grants eternal life: The 12<sup>th</sup> says, “I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may delay, nevertheless I anticipate every day that he will come. The 13<sup>th</sup> says: I believe with perfect faith that there will be a resurrection of the dead at a time that will please the Creator, blessed and exalted be His Name forever and ever.

What is the process of resurrection according to our sages? First, the body will be rebuilt from the luz bone, a tiny but very tough bone in the spine. [The Roman Emperor] Hadrian asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hanania: “From what part [of the body] will the Holy One, blessed be He, cause man to blossom forth in the future?” He replied: “From the nut of the spinal column.” He asked: “How do you know that?” He replied: “Bring me one and I will prove it to you.” He threw it into the fire, yet it was not burnt. He put it in water, but it did not dissolve. He ground it between millstones, but it was not crushed. He placed it on an anvil and smote it with a hammer. The anvil was cleft and the hammer split, yet it remained intact.<sup>5</sup>

Second, you will come back as you went: As a man departs [this life] so will he be when he is resurrected. If he departs blind, he will return blind; if he departs deaf, he will return deaf; if he departs mute, he will return mute; if he departs lame, he will return lame; if he departs clothed, he will return clothed... Hashem said, “Let them arise as they went, and afterwards I will heal them.”<sup>6</sup>

Third, the order of events is as follows: The Messiah comes, rebuilds the Temple in Jerusalem, and gathers all living Yisrael in the Land of Yisrael. Then, forty years later, the dead are resurrected, by descending order of righteousness: First, the scholars who mostly studied Torah, then those who mostly followed *mitzvot*; first the dead of Yisrael, then the dead in the Diaspora. The latter will burrow through the earth until they reach Yisrael.

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<sup>3</sup> BT, Sanhedrin 10:1

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Berachot 60b

<sup>5</sup> B’resheet Rabbah 28:3

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 95:1; also BT, Sanhedrin 91b

Fourth, following the bodily resurrection is a spiritual life in the World to Come. The Talmud<sup>7</sup> gives more details, summarized by Maimonides: There are no bodies and no bodily forms in the World to Come... There is no eating or drinking there, nor is there anything which the human body needs in this world. Nor does there occur there any of the events which occur to the human body in this world, such as sitting, standing, sleep, death, distress, laughter, and so forth. The ancient sages say: “In the World to Come, there is no eating or drinking or procreation, but the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads and bask in the radiance of the Divine Presence...”

There is no way for us in this world to know or comprehend the great goodness which the soul experiences in the World to Come, for in this world we know only of material pleasures, and it is these we desire. (Rambam, Yad, Teshuvah 8) Many commentators likewise emphasize the spiritual nature of the afterlife.

In conclusion: In the Torah, Hashem tells us: I have set before you life and death. Choose life! (Deut. 30:19) Death is never depicted as something to look forward to, only a part of the divine plan. Death gives us the discipline to make the best use of our time on earth, because we know there will not always be a tomorrow. Thus, we say at the end of the day, when our body is tired and ready for bed, “Grant me light, so that I do not sleep the sleep of death...”

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<sup>7</sup> BT, Berakhot, 17a