

# **BIBLICAL REFERENCES: 'SHEOL' = THE PLACE OF THE DEAD**

## **DEATH IS A DESCENT INTO THE EARTH**

### **Psalm 49:7-14 (the dead are buried in the grave, and descend to Sheol)**

Truly, no ransom avails for one's life, there is no price one can give to God for it. For the ransom of life is costly, and can never suffice, that one should live on forever and never see the grave. When we look at the wise, they die; fool and dolt perish together and leave their wealth to others. Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they named lands their own. Mortals cannot abide in their pomp; they are like the animals that perish. Such is the fate of the foolhardy, the end of those who are pleased with their lot. Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; straight to the grave they descend, and their form shall waste away; Sheol shall be their home.

### **Deuteronomy 32:22 (the depths of Sheol = the foundations of the mountains)**

For a fire is kindled by my anger, and burns to the depths of Sheol; it devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

### **Isaiah 7:10-11 (the depth of Sheol vs. the height of heaven)**

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.

### **Ephesians 4:8-10 (a new testament reference to Jesus "descended to the dead")**

It is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)

## **SHEOL IS THE PLACE WHERE DEAD PEOPLE GO**

### **Job 7:7-10 (our life is a breath, we end up in Sheol)**

Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good. The eye that beholds me will see me no more; while your eyes are upon me, I shall be gone. As the cloud fades and vanishes, so those who go down to Sheol do not come up; they return no more to their houses, nor do their places know them any more.

### **Job 17:13-16 (Job refers to Sheol as the house of the dead)**

If I look for Sheol as my house, if I spread my couch in darkness, if I say to the Pit, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother,' or 'My sister,' where then is my hope? Who will see my hope? Will it go down to the bars of Sheol? Shall we descend together into the dust?"

### **Job 21:7, 13 (Job refers to Sheol as the house of the dead)**

Why do the wicked live on, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? ... They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol.

## **SHEOL IS CALLED BY MANY NAMES**

### **Psalm 88:1-13 (The prayer of a person near death - note synonyms for "Sheol" in bold)**

O LORD, God of my salvation, when, at night, I cry out in your presence, let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to **Sheol**. I am counted among those who go down to **the Pit**; I am like those who have no help, like those forsaken **among the dead**, like the slain that lie in **the grave**, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand. You have put me in the depths of **the Pit**, in the **regions dark and deep**. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a thing of horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape; my eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call on you, O LORD; I spread out my hands to you. Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the shades rise up to praise you? Is your steadfast love declared in **the grave**, or your faithfulness in **Abaddon**?\* Are your wonders known in **the darkness**, or your saving help in **the land of forgetfulness**? But I, O LORD, cry out to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you.

(\* see Revelation 9:11 "the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon")

### **From the Apocrypha: Tobit 13:1-2 (note the Greek use of the word "Hades" for Sheol)**

Tobit said: "Blessed be God who lives forever, because his kingdom lasts throughout all ages. For he afflicts, and he shows mercy; he leads down to Hades in the lowest regions of the earth, and he brings up from the great abyss, and there is nothing that can escape his hand.

## **EVERYONE GOES TO SHEOL**

### **Job 3:11-19 (Job in his suffering, longs for the rest of death)**

Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? Why were there knees to receive me, or breasts for me to suck? Now I would be lying down and quiet; I would be asleep; then I would be at rest with kings and counselors of the earth who rebuild ruins for themselves, or with princes who have gold, who fill their houses with silver. Or why was I not buried like a stillborn child, like an infant that never sees the light? There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together; they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there, and the slaves are free from their masters.

### **Isaiah 14:9-11, 15 (God's curses the king of Babylon: to end up in Sheol like everyone else)**

Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations. All of them will speak and say to you: "You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!" Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the sound of your harps; maggots are the bed beneath you, and worms are your covering. But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit.

### **Psalms 89:47-48 (a prayer to be remembered by God)**

Remember how short my time is — for what vanity you have created all mortals! Who can live and never see death? Who can escape the power of Sheol?

## **SHEOL IS A SHADOW EXISTENCE**

### **Isaiah 26:14**

The dead do not live; shades do not rise -- because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them.

### **Proverbs 9:18**

They do not know that the dead (Hb: "shades") are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

### **Ecclesiastes 9:5-10**

The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no more reward, and even the memory of them is lost. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished; never again will they have any share in all that happens under the sun. Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has long ago approved what you do. Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

### **Psalms 6:4-5**

Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love. For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who can give you praise?

## **DEATH IS DESCRIBED AS A DEEP SLEEP**

### **Job 14:10-13 (Job compares the experience of the dead to a deep sleep)**

But mortals die, and are laid low; humans expire, and where are they? As waters fail from a lake, and a river wastes away and dries up, so mortals lie down and do not rise again; until the heavens are no more, they will not awake or be roused out of their sleep. Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath is past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!

### **Daniel 12:1b-3 (the prophet speaks a promise to those who "sleep in the dust of the earth")**

There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

### **John 11:11-15 (Jesus tells his disciples his friend Lazarus is "asleep")**

He told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."