

# Bible Cosmology 303B:

## Immortality, Consciousness, Hell, Universal Salvation



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### *Introduction: Conscious Existence after the Death of the Body*

In an earlier segment of this study, we established 11 biblical proofs that spirit (as a substance) is immortal based on textual details in Genesis 2, 1 Corinthians 15, Romans 8, John 4 and 7, and 2 Corinthians 5. These passages consistently depicted only the human body, which was originally formed from the inanimate soil of the earth, as the mortal component of man. Conversely, each passage consistently depicted spirit as inherently life-giving and unyielding to destruction. And while examining the scriptural evidence for immortal resurrection, we also learned from Jesus that those who are resurrected will be literally incapable of dying after the resurrection. When we combine this fact with Paul's assertion that the resurrected body is a spiritual body, we find one more proof that spirit is inherently life-giving and unyielding to destruction.

During this section, we will return our attention to this fact and particularly the implications that it has regarding the cessation of existence of a human being. As stated earlier, because scripture has shown that life is an inherent property of spirit and spirit is inherently unyielding to destruction, then destroying spirit itself will not be an option for causing a human being to cease to exist. The only remaining theoretical option available for ending the existence of a human being is by means of removing the spirit in a process that reverses the way that breathing into Adam's molded body caused Adam to become a living being. We have already acknowledged that according to Genesis 7:21-22 some animals possess a lesser measure of spirit and, consequently, when an animal dies it undoubtedly ceases to exist when the spirit departs. Now we will directly investigate whether the same thing happens to human beings at the death of the body or whether human beings, unlike animals, continue to consciously exist when the physical body dies.

### *Solomon, Psalms, and What Happens to the Spirit after Death*

King Solomon himself pondered the difference between men and animals with regard to what happens to the spirit when the body dies. We find Solomon's reflections on this topic in Ecclesiastes.

**Ecclesiastes 3:18 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. 19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. 20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. 21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? 22 Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?**

From ancient times, the Book of Ecclesiastes has generally been considered to have been written by King Solomon late in his life.

**ECCLESIASTES, BOOK OF:** *Name and Authorship.* The name "Ecclesiastes"—literally, "Member of an Assembly," often thought to mean (after Jerome) "Preacher"—is the Septuagint rendering of the Hebrew "Kohélet," apparently as an intensive formation from the root "qahal," with which such forms as the Arabic "rawiyyah" (professional reciter) have been compared. The Hebrew word is given by the author of the book as his name, sometimes with the article (xii. 8, and probably vii. 27), but ordinarily without it: similar license is allowed in Arabic in the case of some common nouns used as proper names. **The author represents himself as the son of David, and king over Israel in Jerusalem (i. 1, 12, 16; ii. 7, 9).** The work consists of personal or autobiographic matter, with reflections on the purpose of life and the best method of conducting it. These, the author declares, were composed by him as he increased in wisdom, were "weighed," studied, corrected, expressed in carefully chosen phrases, and correctly written out (xii. 9, 10), to be taught to the people. The fact of the author describing himself in the foregoing style, together with his statements concerning the brilliancy of his court and his studies in philosophy (i. 13-17, ii. 4-11), **led the ancients to identify him with Solomon; and this identification, which appears in the Peshitta, Targum, and Talmud (compare 'Er. 21b; Shab. 30a), passed unquestioned till comparatively recent times.** The order of the Solomonic writings in the canon suggested that Ecclesiastes was written before Canticles (Rashi on B. B. 14b); whereas another tradition made their composition simultaneous, or put Ecclesiastes last (Seder 'Olam Rabbah, ed. Ratner, p. 66, with the editor's notes). **The fact that Kohélet speaks of his reign in the past tense (i. 12) suggested that the book was written on Solomon's death-bed (ib.).** – Jewish Encyclopedia, By: Morris Jastrow, Jr., David Samuel Margoliouth, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5415-ecclesiastes-book-of>

There are several points worth noting from Ecclesiastes 3.

Number one, Solomon is not speaking in faith when he makes these remarks. We know that Solomon's remarks are made from a hopeless, faithless state because of the phrase "all is vanity" at the end of verse 19. Solomon's conclusion also conveys his despair. In verse 22, he advises that man's only "portion" is to enjoy

the fruit of his work in this present life. The Hebrew word for “portion” is “cheleq” (Strong’s Number 02506), which is a word closely associated with the idea of an inheritance, including the land inheritance promised to Israel (Deuteronomy 10:9, Joshua 14:3-5). Consequently, Solomon is here expressing that there is no inheritance after death. And he concludes verse 22 by stating plainly that a man cannot know or “see what shall be after him.”

Number two, Solomon’s outlook here is a far cry from Abraham’s faith according to Hebrews 11. According to Hebrews 11:17-19, Abraham believed that if a man did not receive God’s promises in this life, God would resurrect him to bestow those promises upon him. In fact, the theme of Hebrews 11:13 describes saints of the Old Testament as having “died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.” Hebrews 11:6 states that “without faith it is impossible to please” God and that those “who cometh to God must believe” that God “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Inasmuch as Solomon’s statements express disbelief in any reward after death, we must regard his words here in Ecclesiastes, not as a correct affirmation of postmortem truths, but as scripture’s preservation of Solomon as a cautionary example of the despair that sets in when one walks away from the truth revealed in God’s Word. 1 Kings 11:4 and 9 confirm this assessment of Solomon’s remarks by reporting that late in his life Solomon turned away from the ways of the Lord.

Number three, at best Solomon’s question in verse 21 should be taken as an accurate reflection of Solomon’s perspective when he wrote. He asks, “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” In other words, Solomon was confessing that he was not sure about what would happen after death. In light of this uncertainty, he advised that it was better to enjoy what we have now. But the bottom line is that we should not mistake an open declaration of ignorance from a person who is not following God as an assertion of doctrinal fact.

Number four, it is also noteworthy that Solomon himself seems to have contradictory thoughts on this matter.

**Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (07307) shall return unto God who gave it. 8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.**

In chapter 3 Solomon is uncertain about the status of men after death and whether or not spirit of man goes up to God or downward toward the earth like an animal. But in chapter 12, he asserts that the spirit of man “shall return to God.” We should also point out that verse 8 reveals this statement is also made in despair as reflected in the phrase “all is vanity.” The hopeless, contrary, and uncertain nature of Solomon’s comments further demonstrate that we should not choose his remarks as the bedrock for proper doctrine about the afterlife.

Number five, we should take a moment to focus on Solomon's notion that "the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." A little later in this segment, we will explore passages from both the Old and the New Testaments describing the ancient Jewish belief that the spirits of the dead went to reside within the earth in a place known as "Sheol" in Hebrew or "Hades" in Greek. It is easy to explain why Solomon's comments might contradict those passages, given his apparent state of uncertainty and admitted ignorance regarding the topic as we established from Ecclesiastes 3. However, it is also possible to reconcile Solomon's comments with the ancient Jewish belief in Sheol. So long as Solomon means simply that eventually or ultimately the spirit returns to God, but not necessarily immediately, then there is no contradiction. For the ancient Jews believed that in the future even the dead would come out of Sheol to stand before God in judgment. (See for example, Revelation 20:12-14.)

Number six and most importantly, while Solomon's comparison to animals in chapter 3 must be regarded as a sincere uncertainty rather than a firm teaching, his seemingly more certain statement in chapter 12 does not specify in what state the spirit returns to God. In particular, Solomon makes no assertions whatsoever about whether the spirit retains its conscious, human identity when it departs the body.

Consequently, there is nothing in Solomon's remarks that would provide a sound basis for denying that human beings continue to consciously exist after death. On the other hand, it is worth pointing out that the statement "the spirit shall return unto God" in Ecclesiastes 12:7 is perfectly consistent with the notion that upon the death of the body, the spirit of man departs and continues to exist, which is something we will continue to evidence for elsewhere in scripture. Nevertheless, whether the spirit of man goes up to God or down like "the beast" is not something we can or should determine based on Solomon's remarks. Nor can we or should we use Solomon's remarks to determine what happens to human consciousness after death.

Having discussed Solomon's comments in detail, we are still faced with a pressing question. Solomon's remarks are recorded in scripture. Does that mean we should use Solomon's statements as a basis for evaluating doctrine? And, if we reject Solomon's conclusions are we rejecting this portion of scripture.

We have already partially provided an answer to this important question. The key is to understand why God preserved such statements in scripture. Was it to tell us the truth about existence after death? Based on Solomon's faithless state as reflected in the texts as well as his uncertainty and admitted ignorance, it would be hard to conclude that God intended these texts to be understood as a revelation about postmortem existence. The hopelessness, uncertainty, and ignorance suggest that scripture preserved these words from Solomon, not as a correct affirmation of postmortem truths, but as a cautionary example of the despair that sets in when one walks away from the truth revealed in God's Word. So long as we understand Ecclesiastes within those parameters, which are themselves suggested by the text, then we can maintain the authoritative intent of scripture

even if we do not accept Solomon's remarks as reflective of scriptural truth about life after death.

Second, before we move too far away from Solomon's comments, we should examine similar language in Psalm 146. Notice that the word "breath" in Psalm 146 is "ruwach" (Strong's Number 07307), the common Hebrew word for "spirit," which is the same word that appears in Ecclesiastes 12.

**Psalms 146:4 His breath (07307) goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.**

Number one, unlike Ecclesiastes 12, Psalm 146 does not specify where a man's spirit goes after death. It simply says that the spirit "goes forth." Likewise, the going forth of his spirit is contrasted here to what returns to the earth, which we can conclude is the human body based on Genesis 3:19. Therefore, this passage provides no information about whether the departed spirit goes to Sheol or returns to God.

Number two, according to this verse, when a man dies and his spirit departs, "in that very day his thoughts perish." But does the idea of "thoughts perishing" necessarily convey the idea that consciousness ceases? The Hebrew word for "thoughts" is "eshtonah" (Strong's Number 06250), which the Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon denotes is derived "from 06245," which is the Hebrew word "ashath." "According to the lexicon, "ashath" means "to be smooth, shiny, gleam" or "to think." "Eshtonah" only appears one time in scripture here in Psalm 146, which makes it difficult to examine its meaning more thoroughly by comparison to other usages. "Ashath" appears in two places, Jeremiah 5:28 and Jonah 1:6.

**Jeremiah 5:27** As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: **therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.** **28 They are waxen fat, they shine (06245):** yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, **yet they prosper;** and the right of the needy do they not judge. **29 Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?** **30** A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; **31** The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and **what will ye do in the end thereof?** **6:1** O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to **flee out of the midst of Jerusalem,** and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Bethhaccerem: **for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.**

In Jeremiah, "ashath" is translated as "shine," not as thought. In the context, the term is used to refer to the prosperity of the wicked. Verses 27-28 use "ashath" in conjunction with the idea of the wicked "becoming great," waxing rich," "waxing fat" and also with the phrase "they prosper." Of course, it is easy to see the connection between the metaphorical imagery of "shining" and prospering. To whatever extent that "ashath" refers to "thoughts" here, it conveys the idea of the intentions and plans of the wicked to prosper themselves.

In Jonah, we find “ashath” occurring in a passage discussing what takes place while Jonah is aboard a ship trying to flee from God’s commission for him to preach to Nineveh.

**Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. 4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. 6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think (06245) upon us, that we perish not.**

When Jonah flees, God brings a storm upon the ship on which Jonah is traveling. When the shipmaster finds Jonah in verse 6, he tells Jonah to “call upon they God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.” The word for “think” is “ashath.” And the context indicates that “ashath” here refers to positive intentions to benefit Jonah and those on board.

From this comparison to Jeremiah and Jonah, we can conclude that “ashath” refers to positive or beneficial intentions. In this sense, it is very much related to “thought” but with a more specific nuance. If we apply this same connotation to “eshtonah” in Psalm 146, the Psalmist would not be stating that men utterly cease to think when they die, but rather that their positive or beneficial intentions for themselves come to no avail. Or, in other words, a man’s plans for his future in this mortal life come to an end when he dies.

Number three, in confirmation of this interpretation we should note two similarities between Psalm 146 and Jeremiah 5.

First, both Jeremiah 5 and Psalm 146 are referring specifically to those in power or positions of influence. Verse 3 of Psalm 146 warns, “Put not your trust in princes.” Similarly, Jeremiah is describing those who are “rich” and have “become great.”

Second, notice that verses 29-31 of Jeremiah 5 conclude with God’s promise to bring an end to the prosperity of the wicked. In fact, God poses this as a question, saying, “what will ye do in the end thereof?” The narrative continues immediately in the next verse, which is the first verse of chapter 6, in which God declares that he will bring “evil” and “great destruction” upon these wicked rulers of Jerusalem. And in this context, it would be very easy to imagine God asking the wicked what will become of all their “thoughts” and “shining” when that destruction comes. Even without such a rhetorical question, the text of Jeremiah

clearly affirms that the coming destruction will bring an end to the “ashath,” the shining and prosperity of those with power and influence.

Consequently, if “eshtonah” likewise refers to intentions or plans to prosper, then the use of “eshtonah” in Psalm 146 and the use of “ashath” in Jeremiah 5 would line up perfectly. Both passages would describe that the rulers’ plans and intentions to prosper all come to nothing at death. But most importantly, given this underlying vocabulary it would be unwarranted to insist that Psalm 146 is referring to the utter end of human thought at death. The texts clearly and easily facilitate other meanings, which have no implications whatsoever regarding the status of the human spirit after death.

### *Historical Evidence: Conscious Existence after the Death of the Body*

There are several evidences that human beings continue to consciously exist after death. We will start with some historical information provided by Encyclopedia Britannica. Earlier, we noted that there were two prominent religious groups in Israel at the time of Jesus. These sects were known as the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The encyclopedia excerpt below, which we have already examined, denotes that the Pharisees believed in “the immortality of the soul.”

**"Sadducee, Jewish sect - The Sadducees and Pharisees were in constant conflict with each other,** not only over numerous details of ritual and the Law but most importantly over the content and extent of God’s revelation to the Jewish people. **The Sadducees** refused to go beyond the written Torah (first five books of the Bible) and thus, **unlike the Pharisees, denied the immortality of the soul, bodily resurrection after death, and the existence of angelic spirits."** - <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Sadducee>

There was also a third Jewish religious sect that existed from the second century BC to the first century AD. They were known as the Essenes. Below is an encyclopedia excerpt describing the Essenes and, as we can see, like the Pharisees they believed in the immortality of the soul. The article does not apply the term “immortality” to the soul directly. But given that the article does specify that the Essenes did not believe in the resurrection of the body, their belief in immortality must have applied to the soul.

**“Essene, Ancient Jewish Sect –** Essene, member of a religious sect or brotherhood that **flourished in Palestine from about the 2nd century BC to the end of the 1st century AD...**Like the Pharisees, the Essenes meticulously observed the Law of Moses, the Sabbath, and ritual purity. **They also professed belief in immortality** and divine punishment for sin. But **unlike the Pharisees, the Essenes denied the resurrection of the body.**” – Britannica.com

Of course, it is certainly possible that the Pharisees and the Essenes had developed ideas that deviated from the teaching of the Old Testament. We will answer that question momentarily when we delve into the scriptural evidence.

However, the grammatical historical method of interpretation requires that any good exegete must not interpret scripture in a vacuum. Instead, we must take into consideration the historical setting of scriptural texts. If we find Old or New Testament texts describing human beings continuing to exist in a disembodied state after death, we will have to recognize that two out of three major Jewish sects at the time of the New Testament interpreted those passages literally and concluded that the human soul continued to exist even after the death of the body.

This is even more critical given that Paul himself was trained as a Pharisee. If we see Paul conveying ideas that human beings continue to exist after the death of the body, we will have to interpret that as consistent with his education as a Pharisee, a religious sect that believed in the immortality of the soul. In short, these historical factors prevent us from creating a vacuum that allows us to speculate or insert our own modern notions into the interpretive process of scriptural texts regarding the postmortem immortality of disembodied human beings.

On this note, we should perhaps take a moment to discuss possible alternative concepts of the “immortality” of the soul. More specifically, it could be suggested that the breath itself, the substance of spirit first imparted by God into Adam, continues to exist after death and returns to God but not the conscious human individual identity of the dead person. After all, we have already demonstrated that spirit is a substance and that life is an inherent property of spirit. Perhaps it could even be suggested that the individual identity of the dead person does continue, not in the sense that they consciously continue to exist as persons, but only in the sense that they are preserved in God’s memory and reserved for later resurrection. There are a few items worth noting regarding such possibilities.

First, at least with regard to the summaries provided by Encyclopedia Britannica, it is clear that “immortality” refers to the ongoing, conscious existence of the individual. We see this with regard to the Pharisees because the first excerpt above attached the term immortality to the phrase “of the soul.” Regardless of whether the authors of this excerpt shared an exact biblical definition of the “soul,” the term was clearly meant in reference to an individual human, not merely to an unconscious, “identity-less” substance or to the ongoing memory of that person in the mind of God. Although the excerpt on the Essenes uses the word “immortality” as a standalone term, the excerpt compares the Essenes belief to the belief of the Pharisees, which referred to the immortality of the soul. Moreover, it is very doubtful that anyone would adhere to the belief in “immortality” but define immortality as ceasing to consciously exist as an individual. The cessation of conscious, individual existence is by definition the opposite of immortality, at least in the biblical Judeo-Christian tradition which rejects the pagan notion of pantheism. For instance, imagine that someone offered you immortality but then proceeded to explain that in this form of immortality you would cease to exist as an individual with self-awareness. You might regard them as confused, incompetent, or using misleading terms, but you would not regard their offer as immortality in any coherent sense.



Second, we must interpret phrases like “immortality” and “immortality of the soul” in terms of the historical context that they refer to. In this case, what did the Pharisees and Essenes mean by the term. Scripture will provide the raw materials from which they drew their beliefs about immortality. And when we examine those scriptures momentarily, we will see that the texts are absolutely incompatible with the concept of an impersonal, unconscious existence after death.

Third, we cannot interpret ancient belief in “immortality” in isolation from other ancient Jewish beliefs. The Jewish concept of Hell, known in Judaism as Sheol, not only confirms but also requires that ancient Jews believed that the individual continues to consciously exist after death (prior to resurrection). Below is an excerpt from Encyclopedia Britannica on the Jewish belief in Sheol. Notice that the summary starts with assessment of how “Sheol” is depicted “In the Hebrew Bible.”

**Hell, Religion, Judaism – In the Hebrew Bible, Sheol (*She'ōl*) is a place of darkness, silence, and dust to which the spirit, or vital principle, descends at death.** It is likened to a vast house whose entrance is guarded, like family burial sites, by gates and iron bolts; to a prison in which the dead are held captive by strong cords; to an insatiable beast with spreading jaws; and also to a watery abyss. **Once in Sheol, the dead are cut off from their living kin and from cultic relationship with God. Yet God retains his sovereignty over Sheol, searching out the evildoers who hide in its depths, preserving or delivering the just from Sheol's grasp, and, ultimately as later apocalyptic and rabbinic texts make explicit, restoring the dead to life. At least in the postexilic portions of the Hebrew Bible (those written after the Babylonian captivity), death does not hold the same fate for all. The unjust, the improperly buried, and the untimely dead endure the misery of Sheol, but, for those who die in God's favour, the natural bitterness of death is mitigated by reunion with their ancestors. Late prophetic books, concerned with the vindication of God's justice, warn of a coming “Day of the Lord” in which the wicked will be burned up like stubble (Malachi 4:1), the corpses of God's enemies will suffer endless corruption (Isaiah 66:24), and evildoers who have died will be resurrected to “shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2) while the just enjoy the fulfillment of God's promises. In some postbiblical Jewish writings, Gehenna, the incineration ground where children had once been sacrificed to the god Moloch, emerges as a realm of postmortem punishment more like Hell than Sheol. In Gehenna the unjust dead would suffer a fiery torment of duration and severity proportionate to their crimes.”** – Britannica.com

There are a few points worth noting from this excerpt.

First, according to Encyclopedia Britannica the Hebrew Bible depicts Sheol in several ways. Especially noteworthy are the depictions of the dead in Sheol, particularly those in the older parts of the Hebrew Bible. The dead are held captive in Sheol. They are cut off from their living kin in Sheol. They are cut off from “cultic” relationship with God in Sheol. God will deliver the just from

Sheol. God will restore the dead in Sheol to life. For the wicked, Sheol is a place of misery. But for the righteous, Sheol is not a place of bitterness but a place of reunion with ancestors. All of these images inherently require that humans continue to exist as conscious individuals, capable of experiencing misery and comfort, after the death of the body.

Second, the excerpt does conclude with a list of descriptions that seem to be presented as inconsistent with one another. In Malachi the wicked are reduced to stubble, which implies the cessation of their existence. In Isaiah, rather than stubble, the corpses of the wicked endure an endless corruption. In Daniel, the wicked will not be left in Sheol at all but resurrected to experience shame and contempt. The placement of shame and contempt after resurrection implies that this is the type of shame and contempt experienced by living individuals. And Gehenna is depicted as a place of torment as punishment that continues for a duration of time that is “proportional” to one’s crimes. The term “proportional” rules out the possibility of any instantaneous end to such torment. Even the relatively shorter durations would have to be somewhat long.

And although Malachi and possibly Isaiah may at first glance seem to present a cessation of existence, Daniel and the concept of Gehenna present a continuation of existence. While the author of the encyclopedia article may be content with presenting these as differing views of Hell and Sheol found in scripture, those who uphold to the inerrancy of scripture as God’s Word will be required to reconcile the details of these passages. Consequently, we will not be free to reject the whole of them on the grounds that they are inconsistent or to pick and choose which we prefer and reject the rest. We cannot simply base our beliefs on those passages which depict the wicked (or the dead in general as ceasing to exist) and then disregard those passages which depict them as continuing to consciously exist even after death or even in Sheol or Hell. Instead, we will need a single model that can reconcile all of scripture’s details on this subject, including endless corruption, resurrection to shame and endless contempt, and a place of fiery torment as punishment for a duration, imprisonment of the dead, misery, and even reunion with ancestors. It is simply not possible to derive any model that accommodates all these concepts while simultaneously denying the ongoing, conscious existence of the individual (whether wicked or righteous) after the death of the body.

Similar conclusions about the biblical and ancient Jewish teachings on Sheol can be found in the Jewish Encyclopedia’s article on this topic. Like the excerpt from Encyclopedia Britannica, the commentary provided by the Jewish Encyclopedia contains items, which require further analysis. Nevertheless, once again we can see that biblical data led Jews of the ancient periods to identify Sheol as a place where deceased humans, departed from their decaying corpses, continued to consciously exist, to interact with one another, to mourn, to rejoice, etc.

**Sheol – Biblical Data – It connotes the place where those that had died were believed to be congregated. Jacob, refusing to be comforted at the supposed death of Joseph, exclaims: "I shall go down to my son a mourner unto Sheol"**

(Gen. xxxvii. 36, Hebr.; comp. ib. xlii. 38; xliv. 29, 31). **Sheol is underneath the earth** (Isa. vii. 11, lvii. 9; Ezek. xxxi. 14; Ps. lxxxvi. 13; Ecclus. [Sirach] li. 6; comp. Enoch, xvii. 6, "toward the setting of the sun"); hence it is designated as (Deut. xxxii. 22; Ps. lxxxvi. 13) or (Ps. lxxxviii. 7; Lam. iii. 55; Ezek. xxvi. 20, xxxii. 24). It is very deep (Prov. ix. 18; Isa. lvii. 9); and it marks the point at the greatest possible distance from heaven (Job xi. 8; Amos ix. 2; Ps. cxxxix. 8). **The dead descend or are made to go down into it; the revived ascend or are brought and lifted up from it** (I Sam. ii. 6; Job vii. 9; Ps. xxx. 4; Isa. xiv. 11, 15). Sometimes the living are hurled into Sheol before they would naturally have been claimed by it (Prov. i. 12; Num. xvi. 33; Ps. lv. 16, lxiii. 10), in which cases the earth is described as "opening her mouth" (Num. xvi. 30). **Sheol is spoken of as a land** (Job x. 21, 22); **but ordinarily it is a place with gates** (ib. xvii. 16, xxxviii. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 10; Ps. ix. 14), **and seems to have been viewed as divided into compartments** (Prov. vii. 27), with "farthest corners" (Isa. xiv. 15; Ezek. xxxii. 23, Hebr.; R. V. "uttermost parts of the pit"), one beneath the other (see Jew. Encyc. v. 217, s. v. Eschatology). **Here the dead meet** (Ezek. xxxii.; Isa. xiv.; Job xxx. 23) **without distinction of rank or condition—the rich and the poor, the pious and the wicked, the old and the young, the master and the slave**—if the description in Job iii. refers, as most likely it does, to Sheol. **The dead continue after a fashion their earthly life. Jacob would mourn there** (Gen. xxxvii. 35, xlii. 38); David abides there in peace (I Kings ii. 6); the warriors have their weapons with them (Ezek. xxxii. 27), yet they are mere shadows ("rephaim"; Isa. xiv. 9, xxvi. 14; Ps. lxxxviii. 5, A. V. "a man that hath no strength"). The dead merely exist without knowledge or feeling (Job xiv. 13; Eccl. ix. 5). Silence reigns supreme; and oblivion is the lot of them that enter therein (Ps. lxxxviii. 13, xciv. 17; Eccl. ix. 10). Hence it is known also as "Dumah," the abode of silence (Ps. vi. 6, xxx. 10, xciv. 17, cxv. 17); and there God is not praised (ib. cxv. 17; Isa. xxxviii. 15). **Still, on certain extraordinary occasions the dwellers in Sheol are credited with the gift of making known their feelings of rejoicing at the downfall of the enemy** (Isa. xiv. 9, 10). Sleep is their usual lot (Jer. li. 39; Isa. xxvi. 14; Job xiv. 12). **Sheol is a horrible, dreary, dark, disorderly land** (Job x. 21, 22); **yet it is the appointed house for all the living** (ib. xxx. 23). Return from Sheol is not expected (II Sam. xii. 23; Job vii. 9, 10; x. 21; xiv. 7 et seq.; xvi. 22; Ecclus. [Sirach] xxxviii. 21); it is described as man's eternal house (Eccl. xii. 5). It is "dust" (Ps. xxx. 10; hence in the Shemoneh 'Esreh, in benediction No. ii., the dead are described as "sleepers in the dust"). — Jewish Encyclopedia, By: Emil G. Hirsch, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13563-sheol>

However, it is not our intention to prove all these conclusions with mere modern encyclopedia excerpts. The excerpts simply report that modern academia recognizes not only that the Old Testament does contain evidence for postmortem conscious, individual existence, but that Jewish people of the Old Testament and New Testament periods believed in postmortem conscious, individual existence. We will now move on to examine both the Old and the New Testament evidence that drove ancient Jewish sects such as the Pharisees, the Essenes, and even the earliest Christians (who were themselves predominantly Jewish) to believe that human beings consciously survive the death of the body.

*Scriptural Evidence: Conscious Existence after the Death of the Body*

We will begin our investigation of the scriptural evidence in the Old Testament. Some of the passages we examine will be more explicit than others. But as we examine each passage we must remember to interpret them against the backdrop of the beliefs of the ancient Jewish people, which we saw above.

**Evidence #1 – Genesis 37**

The first passage we will examine is Genesis 37. This chapter describes how Joseph's brothers planned to get rid of him. First, they consider killing him, but ultimately decide to sell him to foreigners. We pick up the narrative in verse 31 where Joseph's brothers dip his coat in the goat's blood in order to trick their father into thinking that Joseph was killed by a wild animal.

**Genesis 37:31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; 32 And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. 33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. 34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave (07585) unto my son mourning.** Thus his father wept for him.

There are three critical components of this passage.

First, we should take note of Jacob's response in verses 33 and 35 when Joseph's brothers present his coat covered in blood. Jacob says, "an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces," which tells us that Jacob deemed Joseph to be dead.

Second, in verse 35 Jacob declares to his sons, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." The Hebrew word translated as "grave" is, in fact, "Sheol" (Strong's Number 07585). This is the very same Hebrew term described in the excerpt from Britannica in our previous segment. The Hebrew lexicon includes the "underworld" and the "grave" as possible meanings. So, how do we know if Jacob intends this to refer to the underworld or perhaps more simply to a typical grave where someone is buried?

Number one, it is important to keep in mind that Jacob perceived Joseph had been torn apart by a wild animal. This is critical because it means that there was no burial and there was no grave site. Consequently, we can rule out that Jacob is talking about going to Joseph's grave site or about Jacob himself being buried next to Joseph on some future day when Jacob himself would die.

Number two, notice that Jacob perceives that he will go to be with Joseph. Since Joseph's body was not found and there was no burial site for him, we are forced to conclude that Jacob has in mind "Sheol" in reference to the underworld. Jacob's expression here fits perfectly well with Britannica's summary that in Sheol "those who die in God's favour" would experience "reunion with their ancestors." Ultimately, Jacob is here testifying to his belief that although Joseph was dead, he still existed in another location.

### **Evidence #2 – Genesis 25**

This concept of Sheol as a place where the dead are gathered and reunited with their ancestors is one we will see again and again in this survey. In fact, we find another early evidence for this belief several chapters earlier in Genesis 25.

**Genesis 25:7** And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, **an hundred threescore and fifteen years.** **8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age,** an old man, and full of years; and **was gathered to his people.** **9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah,** in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, **which is before Mamre;** **10 The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried,** and Sarah his wife.

Genesis 25 recounts the death of Abraham and denotes that he is buried in Machpelah in a field in Mamre, which Abraham had purchased.

There are a few items worth noting here.

First, according to Genesis 13:12-18 Abraham "dwelled in the land of Canaan" and walked throughout the land of Canaan. While walking throughout Canaan Land, he comes to Mamre, which is located in Hebron. Genesis 23:2 declare that "Hebron" is "in the land of Canaan." In short, it is clear that Abraham is buried in Canaan Land.

Second, according to Genesis 23:1-20 Abraham purchased this field at the death of his wife Sarah. At this point, it would be helpful to review some numbers. Genesis 23:1 records that Sarah was one hundred twenty-seven years old when she died. Genesis 17:17 tells us that Abraham was ten years older than Sarah. Genesis 25:7 tells us that Abraham was 175 years old when he died. If Sarah had lived, she would have been 165 years old when Abraham died. Consequently, we can determine that Abraham died some 38 years after he purchased this burial site when Sarah died.

Third, from Genesis 11:26-31, we know that Abraham had two brothers named Nahor and Haran. His brother Haran died in Ur of the Chaldees, the land where Abraham was born. And Abraham's father Terah died in the city of Haran.

Fourth, in Genesis 24:1 we learn that Abraham sends his servant to the land of his brother Nahor to find a wife for his son Isaac. This is one chapter after Abraham

purchases the field to bury Sarah and one chapter before Abraham himself dies. When giving instructions to his servant in verses 3-4, Abraham says, “thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.” Verse 10 recounts that the servant departs for Mesopotamia, unto the “city of Nahor.” When the servant arrives at his destination in verse 15, he encounters Rebekah, the granddaughter of Abraham’s brother Nahor.

With these facts in mind, we now turn our attention back to the death of Abraham in Genesis 25. Verse 25 declares that when Abraham died “he was gathered to his people” and “his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah” in Mamre. But as we have just established, except for Sarah, none of Abraham’s family was buried in Canaan Land. Moreover, the text is equally clear that Abraham’s sons Isaac and Ishmael are still alive. This raises the question, how could Abraham be “gathered to his people” if none of his people are buried in Mamre in Canaan Land? When we combine the fact that Jacob expected to be with his son Joseph again after death in Sheol with the fact that Abraham’s people were not buried in Mamre, the most reasonable conclusion is that the phrase “gathered to his people” refers to Abraham’s disembodied spirit going to Sheol to be reunited with his dead family. Consequently, we see that Genesis 25 is another passage that provides the evidence that drove the Jewish belief that human beings continue to consciously exist after death, particularly in Sheol. Moreover, we have now seen two very early passages both from the book of Genesis establishing the very ancient origin of this Jewish belief.

### **Evidence #3 – The Death of Moses and Aaron**

The Old Testament use of the phrase “gathered to his people” does not end with Abraham and Joseph. We find the same phrases used with regard to the death of Moses himself as well as his brother Aaron.

First, in Numbers 20:24, the Lord tells Moses that Aaron “shall not enter” the Promised Land but instead Aaron “shall be gathered unto his people.” Verse 26 directly explains that Moses was to take Aaron and Aaron’s son Eleazar up mount Hor and that Aaron “shall die there.” Verse 28 confirms that “Aaron died there in the top of the mount. In verse 29, when the people of Israel find out that Aaron is dead, they mourn for him.

**Numbers 20:23** And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, **24 Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land** which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. **25** Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: **26** And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: *and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people*, and shall die there. **27** And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. **28** And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came

down from the mount. 29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

Numbers 33:38-39 also recounts that Aaron died on Mount Hor.

**Numbers 33:38** And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the LORD, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month. 39 And Aaron was an hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in mount Hor.

Second, Deuteronomy 10 again recounts the death of Aaron, but it adds one crucial phrase. Verse 6 says, “there Aaron died, and there he was buried.” Even though Deuteronomy 10 does not mention Mount Hor by name, this phrase informs us that Aaron was buried in the location where he died, which was on Mount Hor. So, we know where Aaron was buried.

**Deuteronomy 10:6** And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera: there Aaron died, and there he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest’s office in his stead.

At this point two other historical facts are critical regarding the location of Aaron’s burial.

Number one, Aaron’s ancestors were not buried on Mount Hor. Abraham was buried at Mamre. Then the Israelites moved to Egypt at the time of Jacob and Joseph. Most of Aaron’s ancestors were undoubtedly buried in Egypt. But in any case, it was clearly not Pharaoh’s custom to let Israelites travel to Mount Hor whenever an Israelite died in order to perform burials.

Number two, the people of Israel, of course, did not settle in the region of Mount Hor and begin to bury their dead there from that time forward. To the contrary, the entire point of Numbers 20:24 was that Aaron would die before entering the Promised Land where the Israelites would settle.

Consequently, there is absolutely no basis for thinking that the phrase “gathered to his people” could refer to Aaron being buried in the same location as his ancestors or contemporary Israelites were buried. Therefore, once again the phrase “gathered to his people” must refer to Aaron being taken to Sheol to be reunited there with his dead ancestors, just as we saw in Genesis 25 and 37.

Third, in Deuteronomy 32:50, God likewise informs Moses that the time has come for Moses to die at which point God tells Moses he will “be gathered unto thy people” just “as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people.”

**Deuteronomy 32:48** And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, 49 Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which

**is in the land of Moab**, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: 50 **And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people.**

Fourth, Deuteronomy 34 states that Moses was “buried in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor.”

**Deuteronomy 34:5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab**, according to the word of the LORD. 6 **And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor:** but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

Now, surely Moses and Aaron had the same ancestors and the same people due to the fact that they were brothers. Yet Aaron died and was buried on Mount Hor and Moses died on Mount Nebo in the land of Moab and was buried in a valley in Moab. Consequently, the only way that Moses and Aaron could be gathered to the same ancestors was if the location where Moses and Aaron was gathered upon death was neither Mount Hor nor a valley near Bethpeor in the land of Moab. Yet there bodies remained in Mount Hor and in Moab near Bethpeor. This means that it was the souls (and the spirits) of Moses and Aaron which were gathered to their ancestors, which was no doubt in Sheol just as many ancient Jews believed.

At this point we have examined three separate instances involving Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, and Moses and Aaron, which have established that the phrase “gathered to his people” cannot refer to a family burial location. Consequently, we can now include a variety of other passages in the Old Testament in which this phrase is used. To be fair, on their own it would be possible for some of these passages to use the phrase “gathered to his people” in reference to a family burial location. But since we have already established that the phrase is meant with regard to the deceased spirits being reunited with family in Sheol, the occurrence of this phrase in these other passages must be interpreted the same way for the sake of consistency. As such, they constitute addition proof regarding how prevalent the notion of continued existence in Sheol was among the ancient Israelites. Additional passages include Isaac in Genesis 35:29, Jacob in Genesis 49:29, 33, Joshua and an entire generation of Israelites in Judges 2:8-10, and King Josiah in 2 Kings 22:1, 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 34:1, 26-28. These addition passages bring the total to 9 passages in the Old Testament that use some variation of the phrase “gathered to his people” to refer to the dead reuniting with their deceased family members and ancestors in Sheol. As we will see in a moment, although it does not use the phrase “gathered to his people,” 2 Samuel 12 provides another instance of this same expectation to reunite with deceased family in Sheol, bring the total number of passages testifying to his ancient Jewish belief to 10.

#### **Evidence #4 – 2 Samuel 12**



We find a similar statement that the dead continue to exist in 2 Samuel 12. This passage depicts the death of the baby that was born as a result of David's adultery with Bathsheba.

**2 Samuel 12:15** And Nathan departed unto his house. **And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.** 16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. 17 And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. 18 **And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?** 19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, **David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.** 20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. 21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23 **But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.**

First, we should note that the text repeatedly states in verses 18, 19, 21, and 23 that the child dies from its illness.

Second, in verse 21 David's servants ask why he is not mourning after the death of the child.

In verse 23 David uses several phrases that depict death as involving a departure or relocation, such as would occur if the soul of the child went to Sheol.

Third, in the beginning of verse 23 David refers to the child saying "now he is dead" and then rhetorically asks, "can I bring him back again?" This phrase directly equates the state of being "dead" with the need for the child to be "brought back." But what exactly is the nature of the relationship between these phrases? Does "brought back" mean "back to life?" Or, does it convey departure or relocation?

Fourth, in the last half of the verse David concludes by saying "he shall not return to me." Here the phrase "return to me" is a direct parallel to the phrase "bring him back," which appeared earlier in the first half of the verse. If we can determine the meaning of one of these phrases, the other will automatically follow suit.

Fifth, “return to me” is juxtaposed to David himself “going to” the child. In other words, the phrases “bring him back” and “return to me” are conceptually related to the idea of David “going to” the child.

There are multiple options for how to interpret these critical phrases from David.

Number one, the phrase “bring him back” could mean “bring him back to life,” which would not have any connotations about departure or relocation to Sheol. However, it is clear that the corresponding phrase “I will go to him,” which is applied to David, cannot refer to David coming back to life.

Number two, the phrase “I will go to him,” could refer to David dying at some future point, which would juxtapose quite fittingly with the idea of bringing the child back to life. But in that case, David’s use of the pronoun “him” would demonstrate that David believed his deceased son would still exist on that future day when David died.

Number three, alternately the phrase “go to him” could refer to David going to the child’s dead body at the burial site, but that wouldn’t fit with the phrase “return to me.” The problem stems from the connection between the pronouns “him” and “me.” If “him” and “me” refer to the child’s body, then the child’s body could be “returned” or “brought back” to David. Instead, David is talking about some aspect of his child that could not be “brought to” or “returned to” him. And the connection between “him” and “me” requires that it is this other aspect of the child that David would “go to,” not the body, but the part that could not be returned or brought to David.

Number four, David could be conveying his belief that his child had departed unto Sheol where David himself would one day go. This is the only interpretation that fits all of the textual evidence. The phrase “go to him” refers to David’s future death at which point he would go to Sheol where his child also went at death. There are no textual obstacles to this interpretation. In fact, this interpretation would explain David’s expectation that the child would still exist when David “goes to him.” Moreover, the phrases “bring him back” and “return to me” refer to the impossibility of David bringing the child’s soul back from Sheol. Again, there are no textual obstacles to this interpretation. And ultimately, the entire passage is perfectly consistent with Jacob’s statement in Genesis 37 in which Jacob expresses the belief that he would be reunited with Joseph in Sheol after death.

Although we have more passages to examine, it is passages like these that explain why sources like Britannica Encyclopedia affirm that ancient Jewish people believed that “In the Bible, Sheol” was a place where “those who die in God’s favour” experience “reunion with their ancestors” and other deceased family members. But more than just providing evidence for the Jewish belief in Sheol, these passages provide evidence that the Old Testament affirms that human beings continue to consciously exist after death and, as such, can be aware of experiencing reunion with deceased family members.

**Evidence #5 – 1 Samuel 28**

Our survey continues with a passage in 1 Samuel. In this passage, Saul remains king of Israel and is desperate for guidance regarding his enemies, the Philistines. But there are several obstacles. First, the Prophet Samuel has died as recorded in verse 3. Second, God refuses to answer Saul through prophets or dreams or any other godly means of seeking divine insight as stated in verse 6. Third, Saul himself had banished those who had familiar spirits and wizards from the land of Israel, as seen in verse 3. For these reasons, Saul is out of options. In his desperation, verse 7 records that Saul instructs his men to find a woman with a familiar spirit.

**1 Samuel 28:1** And it came to pass in those days, that **the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel.** And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men. 2 And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever. 3 **Now Samuel was dead,** and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. **And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.** 4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. 5 And **when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.** 6 And **when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.** 7 Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. 8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. 9 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? 10 And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. 11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. 12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. 13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. 14 And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. 15 And Samuel said to Saul, **Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?** And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that

thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. 16 **Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?** 17 **And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David:** 18 **Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.** 19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and **to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me:** the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines. 20 **Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel:** and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night. 21 **And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice,** and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me. 22 Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way. 23 But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed. 24 And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof: 25 And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

When read in a straightforward manner, this narrative obviously presents the idea that the deceased prophet Samuel resided somewhere within the earth and his spirit was brought up by the witch so that King Saul could seek the dead prophet's counsel. Verse 8, 11, 13, 14, and 15 uses phrases like "bring him up," "ascending out of the earth," and "cometh up" no less than six times. The phrases are used first by King Saul, then by the witch, and finally by the prophet Samuel himself. Consequently, this account provides repeated and direct attestation that biblical Judaism upheld the idea that human beings continued to consciously exist after the death of the body and were transported to dwell in Sheol, which was located below the surface of the earth. In fact, this interpretation is bolstered by related language that we find earlier in 1 Samuel 2:6, which plainly states, "The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." Taken together, these two passages from Samuel indicate that the Israelite culture of Samuel's day believed that when a person died, they went downward to a place where the dead resided and from which they could also be brought back up, just as occurs with Samuel himself in chapter 28.

The only way to avoid these implications is to suggest that there is some sort of a ruse in play in which Samuel is not really being raised from the dead but the witch is merely tricking Saul. However, several details of the story demonstrate that the author of the text did not regard the involvement of Samuel as a mere trick.

First, it is noteworthy that even if we assume this was a trick and Samuel's soul did not really arise from Sheol, the passage still unavoidably attests to the fact that the ancient Jewish people believed human beings continued to consciously exist after the death of the body. According to the text, even before Saul finds the witch, Saul is already operating under the perception that Samuel's soul continues to exist, is capable of conscious interaction, and can be brought up from Sheol. Whether the witch was deceiving Saul or not, she is clearly not the origin of Saul's belief that the dead continued to exist. The fact that Saul believed this shows the presence of such perceptions in ancient Israel. Ultimately, the theory that the witch is tricking Saul is powerless to overturn the evidence in this passage that the ancient Jewish people believed the human soul continues to exist after the death of the body.

Second, the author repeatedly distinguishes between when the witch is speaking and when Samuel is speaking. In verse 11, the author writes, "Then said the woman." In verse 12 again, the author writes, "the woman spake to Saul, saying." In verse 13, the author writes, "And the woman said unto Saul." And again in verse 14, the author writes, "And she said." But in verse 15, instead of recording that the witch is speaking the author instead writes, "And Samuel said to Saul." Verse 15 concludes with Saul replying to Samuel's question. In verse 16, Samuel speaks again and the author writes, "Then said Samuel." But after Samuel finishes speaking to Saul, verse 21 records that "the woman came unto Saul" and "said unto him." Not once does the author ever convey any perception on his part that Samuel's words are merely the words of the witch as she pretends to speak for Samuel. In fact, the author's distinction between when the witch is speaking and when Samuel as speaking are presented with the same simple fidelity that the author distinguishes between the witch and King Saul as different speakers. In short, the way the author identifies speakers reflects that the author of this passage perceived that Samuel was just as much of a real participant as the witch and the king. If the witch was making up Samuel's words on her own, then the author shows no awareness of her deception. And if the author is not aware that this is a deception, there is very little exegetical basis for asserting that we as modern readers have discovered a deception that the author of the account himself did not intend to convey.

Third, Samuel is presented as providing three pieces of information that the witch would not have had on her own. This proves that Samuel is present and that his words are not merely invented by the witch to deceive Saul.

Number one, Samuel is the one who reveals to the witch that her visitor is actually King Saul. The text presents that initially the witch does not know that the man inquiring of her is King Saul. In verse 8, Saul disguises himself when he visits her. In verse 9, the witch refuses to grant his request, explaining that she feared for her life because King Saul had forbidden such things. In verse 10, Saul swears an oath to the Lord that no harm will come to her but he still does not reveal himself to be King Saul. If she had suspected him to be King Saul at this point, it is very unlikely that she would have engaged in witchcraft in his very presence given the penalty of death. Although it could be argued that his oath would have

alleviated her concerns, the fact of the matter was that he had still come in disguise and was maintaining that disguise. Therefore, if she knew this was the king, she would have perceived his intention to deceive her and not trusted his oath. The only way she would have found his oath convincing is if she had no cause to suspect him of deception, which in turn would require that she had not recognized her visitor as the king in disguise. And this brings us to the salient point. Verse 12 states that “when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice” and said to Saul, “Why has thou deceived me? For thou art Saul.” All of these factors together establish that the witch does not know that her visitor is King Saul until she sees Samuel. The way the author presents the sequential arrangement of Samuel’s arrival in relation to the witch’s identification of Saul indicates that Samuel is the source of her knowledge that the visitor is the king. This, of course, demonstrates that in the author’s view, Samuel was really present and consciously interacting even after the death of his body.

Number two, in verses 16-18 the author presents Samuel as recounting to King Saul the same words that Samuel once said to Saul before Samuel died. In verse 18, Samuel refers to God “fierce wrath upon Amelek” which King Saul had not obeyed and refused to execute. We find Samuel giving this command to Saul in 1 Samuel 15:3. After Saul spares King Agag of the Amalekites in verses 8-9 of chapter 15, Samuel criticizes Saul in verses 18-19 of chapter 15, saying, “the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD?” Now, it may have been common knowledge that Saul spared Agag. So, although unlikely, it is possible that the witch could have known about this on her own without Samuel. However, in verse 17 of chapter 28, the deceased Samuel says, “for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour.” This is the very same words Samuel used in chapter 15:28. In fact, the word “rent” is actually a bit of a play on words since in 1 Samuel 15:27 Saul had grabbed hold of Samuel’s clothing causing it to rip. It is very unlikely that the witch would have been privy to such specific details or the exact words that Samuel spoke to Saul that day years earlier.

Moreover, chapter 15 provides indications that Samuel and Saul were most likely alone when this discussion took place. First, verse 24 states that Saul feared the people. Then after Samuel declares the Lord’s rejection of Saul, in verse 30 Saul petitions Samuel to honor him “before the elders of the people, and before Israel.” Saul is attempting to save face before the people whom he feared. Samuel apparently recognizes the need to retain the people’s respect of Saul as King so in verse 31 Samuel concedes to the request. But this attempt to save face and for Samuel to honor Saul in front of the elders and the people would have been entirely irrelevant if Samuel’s rejection of Saul had occurred publicly or even in front of the elders or leaders of the Israelites. This detail strongly suggests that Samuel and Saul’s discussion occurred in a fairly private setting. These considerations further underscore how improbable it was that the witch could have known the details of the encounter or Samuel’s exact words. Consequently,

the best explanation of Samuel's words to Saul in chapter 28:16-18 is that Samuel was actually present, despite the fact that he had physically died.

Number three, in verse 19 Samuel makes a prophecy regarding the future. While it might be simple enough for the witch to speculate that Saul would be defeated by the Philistines, the prophecy is more specific than that. The author records Samuel's prediction that not only Saul but also his sons will be killed in the battle. 1 Samuel 30:2 tells us that "the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons." Chapter 30:3-5 tells us that Saul was "wounded of the archers," then "Saul took a sword, and fell on it" and "his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead." Saul and his three sons were killed in one day! That is too specific and accurate to be a mere speculation. It must be regarded as a true prophecy, which again indicates that the author of this passage perceived that Samuel was indeed present in chapter 28.

Fourth, the fact that the author himself regarded these three pieces of information as actually coming from Samuel, not the witch, is confirmed in verse 20 of chapter 28. In verse 20, the author writes that Saul "was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel." This is a narrative note provided by the author. He could have easily said, "because of the words of the witch." But instead, the author continues to identify Samuel straightforwardly as the source of this information.

Fifth, at this point given these three pieces of information, the only way to avoid Samuel actually being present would be to suppose that the information came from the witch's familiar spirit. In this scenario, the witch's deception is not simply a matter of faking supernatural activity. Instead, real supernatural activity would be occurring but the witch would be falsely attributing that activity to Samuel instead of her familiar spirit. However, such a theory betrays the desperation and prejudice of the person advocating it. Such a theory raises more questions than it answers. After all, it would still be necessary to identify what this familiar spirit is.

It is also important to keep in mind that King Saul perceives that the familiar spirit is integrally involved in bringing Samuel up, according to verse 8. There are three interesting points worth noting about the term "familiar spirit," which will help complete the overall picture.

Number one, it must be noted that the term "familiar spirit" is an English term selected by English-speaking translators. By the time of the earliest English translations of the Bible in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, familiar spirits already existed as a concept in English folklore. According to Britannica's article entitled "Familiar (Demon)" this concept centered on the idea of "a low-ranking demon" that frequently appeared as a "small animal or imp kept as a witch's attendant, given to her by the devil or inherited from another witch." But it is important to draw a distinction between the Hebrew term "owb" and the English term "familiar spirit," which was selected millennia later by translators in a different culture. And although the text of 1 Samuel 28 clearly involves the notion of a spirit associated with a witch, the extent to which the rest of the English

concept applies to the biblical text should be regarded as an open question at the very least. To understand the Hebrew concept, it is best to look to the text of scripture rather than to English folklore from millennia later.

Number two, the Hebrew word for “familiar spirit” is “owb” (Strong’s Number 0178), which denotes a “necromancer” which is “one who evokes the dead.” It also refers to a “ghost, spirit of a dead one.” However, the Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon also notes that “owb” comes “from the same as 01 (apparently through the idea of prattling a father’s name).” The Strong’s Number 01 denotes the Hebrew word “ab,” which means “father of an individual” and “ancestor” in the sense of the “head or founder of a household, group, family, or clan.” It can even mean “ruler or chief.” In light of the patriarchal nature of the term “owb,” perhaps it would have been more accurate if the English translators had used the term “familial,” to denote the idea of a relative or ancestor, instead of “familiar” with all of its baggage from English folklore.

Number three, notice that the Hebrew lexicon explains “owb’s” etymological relationship to “ab,” which means “father,” in terms of “the idea of prattling a father’s name.” This draws our attention to three New Testament passages, which oddly enough connect the Hebrew word “ab” to prayer.

In Romans 8:15, Paul states that Christians “have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” In Galatians 4:6, Paul similarly states, “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” In both passages, the word “Abba” is Strong’s Number 5, which the Online Bible Greek Lexicon notes is “of Aramaic origin 02” and means “father.” The number “02” is the Strong’s Number for the Aramaic equivalent, which is “ab.” “Ab” also means “father” and the Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon notes that it is “corresponding to 01,” which of course is the Hebrew word “ab.” One really intriguing fact here is that the Greek language had its own word for “father,” which was the term “pater” (Strong’s Number 3962). This Greek word appears in both Romans 8 and Galatians 4. Paul easily could have left out the Aramaic and used only Greek. But he didn’t. Consequently, Paul’s inclusion of the Aramaic version means that Paul went unnecessarily out of his way to connect the Hebrew word “ab” with the idea of prayer and receiving God’s own Spirit. This provides a contrasting parallel to 1 Samuel 28, which portrays the witch using the term “owb” to petition help from a spirit of some sort. Given the correspondences between these passages, the parallel can hardly be regarded as unintentional on Paul’s part.

But Romans 8 and Galatians are not the only New Testament passages connecting the term “father” to prayer. When giving instructions regarding how to pray in Matthew 6:7, Jesus tells his disciples “when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen.” The Greek word for “vain repetitions” is “battologeo” (Strong’s Number 945), which means “to stammer” or “to repeat the same things over and over” and even to “prate.” Then in verse 9, Jesus tells his disciples to instead begin their prayers with the phrase “Our Father which art in heaven.” Here we have Jesus himself connecting the idea of addressing prayers with the term “Father” in contrast to pagan methods of prayer which involved repetition. Here



again is another contrasting parallel to 1 Samuel 28. 1 Samuel 28 employs a Hebrew term “owb,” which is not only derivative of the Hebrew term for “father” but also entails references to repeating or “prattling a father’s name.” In fact, Luke’s version of the “Our Father” prayer can be found in chapter 11:2-4, where it is followed by a series of explanatory remarks in which Jesus’ concludes in verse 13 with the assurance that “your heavenly Father” will “give the Holy Spirit to them that ask.” In generic terms, Jesus and Paul are connecting prayer to the term “father” and to the idea of receiving a spirit. Jesus’ contrast to vain repetition only strengthens the intentional contrast to the word “owb” in reference to the witch’s practice in 1 Samuel 28.

Ultimately, proof that “owb” was intended to convey a patriarchal ancestral spirit is proven by the etymological connection of “owb” to the Hebrew word for “father” combined with specific New Testament instructions to use of the term “Abba” in prayer, particularly in connection to God sending us his Spirit. In other words, the “familiar spirit” was most likely the spirit of a dead paternal ancestor, potentially even one who was a powerful ruler or chief. As such, there is no way to avoid 1 Samuel 28 providing proof that the soul continues to consciously exist after death. Whether it is the Prophet Samuel or the witch’s deceased ancestor, this passage attests to information supernaturally acquired by contacting a dead man’s spirit.

In conclusion, once it becomes clear that the text demands a supernatural means of conveying information, the only reason to deny the author’s repeated identification of Samuel as the supernatural source of this information is out of a stubborn bias to avoid Samuel’s ongoing existence after his death. But given King Saul’s pre-existing belief that humans continue to exist after death, Encyclopedia Britannica’s attestation that ancient Jews believed in Sheol as a place where the souls of the dead reside, the passage’s use of language conveying that the dead reside within the earth, and the author’s own repeated and unqualified identification of Samuel as the source of the unknown information, the best conclusion based on the evidence in the text itself is that the author of the passage intended to convey that Samuel was actually present during this encounter, even though he was dead. Consequently, 1 Samuel 28 provides another piece of evidence that human beings continue to consciously exist after the death of the body and are simply relocated to a different location, particularly Sheol.

### **Evidence #6 – Unclean Spirits**

We should also take a few moments to comment further on the concept of the “familiar spirit,” particularly as the spirit of a departed ancestor. This concept fits very well with the findings of our studies on “Spiritual Warfare,” “Giant Lineages,” and “Cosmology.”

First, in these studies we establish that in times past wicked angels had children with human women. These children came to be identified by several Hebrew terms, including the term “Nephilim.” Genesis 6:1-4 uses this term for the first time in scripture and records the occurrence of this practice prior to the Flood of

Noah's day. Genesis 6 also describes that these children became great rulers on earth at that time. The English translations interpret this term to mean "giant." We see the term "Nephilim" again after the Flood in Numbers 13:33 as the Israelites were entering the Promised Land. The English translation again interprets this term to mean "giants" in Numbers 13, which compares the Israelites to mere grasshoppers in comparison to the "Nephilim." A comparison of Deuteronomy 2:11 to Numbers 13:33, reveals that the Hebrew term "rapha," typically translated as "Rephaim," is a virtual synonym for "Nephilim." "Rephaim" literally means "giants." Our "Giant Lineages" follows the recurrence of this phenomenon, particularly among the Canaanite nations in the Promised Land, where the giants again became the rulers or champions of the nations of their mothers. Chief examples include Og the King of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:11) and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:4).

Second, historical evidence for these beliefs among the first-century Jews can be found by an analysis of the New Testament book of Jude, early orthodox Christian writers like Justin Martyr, and an ancient document called the Book of Enoch that was known to the Jewish people of the first century and earlier. Jude is a very brief book consisting of only one chapter comprised of 25 verses. And in that single chapter within just 8 verses, the author manages to mention both angels who "left their own habitation" and were punished for it as well as prophecies made by Enoch, "the seventh from Adam."

**Jude 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day...<sup>14</sup> And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, <sup>15</sup> To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.**

We find the reference to Enoch's prophecies in verses 14-15 of Jude. Interestingly, Jude's language here mirrors the phrasing of the ancient book known as the Book of Enoch. For comparison, below is similar text from chapter 1 of the Book of Enoch.

**Enoch 1:9 And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones To execute judgement upon all, And to destroy all the ungodly: And to convict all flesh Of all the works of their ungodliness which they have committed, And of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.**

Of course, the Book of Enoch is not part of the canon of scripture, neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament. Nor is it necessary to argue for its infallibility. However, Jude's quotation of the Book of Enoch clearly suggests that early Christian authorities were familiar with it and considered at least some of it reliable. Given Jude's mention of angels leaving "their own habitation" in such close proximity to his mention of Enoch, it is perhaps not surprising to note that

the Book of Enoch contains several passages describing that angels (or “watchers”) had children with human women and that those children became “giants.”

**Enoch, Chapter 10 - 8 And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon 9 the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies; because they are born from men and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin; 10 they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called.** [As for the spirits of heaven, in heaven shall be their dwelling, but as for the spirits of the earth which were born upon the earth, on the earth shall be their dwelling.] And the spirits of the giants afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble:

**Enoch, Chapter 15 - And go, say to the Watchers of heaven, who have sent thee to intercede for them: "You should intercede" for men, and not men 3 for you: Wherefore have ye left the high, holy, and eternal heaven, and lain with women, and defiled yourselves with the daughters of men and taken to yourselves wives, and done like the children 4 of earth, and begotten giants (as your) sons? And though ye were holy, spiritual, living the eternal life, you have defiled yourselves with the blood of women, and have begotten (children) with the blood of flesh, and, as the children of men, have lusted after flesh and blood as those also do who die 5 and perish.**

Likewise, early Christians including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian affirmed this conclusion that certain angels voluntarily came to earth from heaven and had children through human woman. While the Book of Enoch refers to these giant offspring as “evil spirits,” Justin and Tertullian refer to them alternately as “demons.”

**“The angels transgressed this appointment and were captivated by love of women. And they begat children, who are those called demons.” - Justin Martyr (c. 110-165 AD)**

**“The poets and mythologists did not know that it was the [wicked] angels, and those demons who had been begotten by them...For they called them by whatever name each of the angels had given to himself and to his children.” - Justin Martyr (c. 110-165 AD)**

**“CHAP. XXXVI. 4. Since the Son of God is always one and the same, He gives to those who believe on Him a well of water(3) [springing up] to eternal life, but He causes the unfruitful fig-tree immediately to dry up; and in the days of Noah He justly brought on the deluge for the purpose of extinguishing that most infamous race of men then existent, who could not bring forth fruit to God, since the angels that sinned had commingled with them, and [acted as He did] in order that He might put a check upon the sins of these men, but [that at the same time] He might preserve the archetype,(4) the formation of Adam.” – Irenaeus, AGAINST HERESIES, BOOK IV**

**“Furthermore, we are instructed by our sacred books how from certain angels, who fell of their own free will, there sprang a more wicked demon brood, condemned of God along with the authors of their race... Their great business is the ruin of mankind. So, from the start, spiritual wickedness sought our destruction.” - Tertullian (approx. 197 AD)**

Third, the first citation of the Book of Enoch above explains that when these giant offspring died, “evil spirits proceeded from their bodies.” However, the text also denotes that when they die, their spirits would not ascend to heaven but “the earth shall be their dwelling” and “they shall be evil spirits on the earth.” Notice that the text does not say these spirits will go down into Sheol. Instead, they will remain on earth. This leads us into the context of the New Testament, which records the ancient phenomenon of demonic possession, which occurred when a human being was subjected to severe influence by an evil spirit. Numerous examples of this activity abound in the New Testament and can be found in such passages as Matthew 8:28-34, 9:32, 12:22, 17:14-21, 15:22, Mark 1:23-27, 3:11 5:2-16, 7:25-30, 9:17-25, Luke 4:33-41, 8:27-38, 9:37-42, 11:14, 13:14, Acts 8:7, 16:16-18, 19:13-16.

Among these examples, we should draw attention to Luke 8:27-38. In verse 31 of this account, the evil spirits (called “devils” in the King James Version) specifically petition Jesus “not to command them to go out into the deep.” Verse 30 informs us that there are “many devils” involved in this incident. But more importantly, the Greek word for “the deep” is “abussos” (Strong’s Number 12), which means, “the abyss, the pit, of Orchus, very deep gulf or chasm in the lowest parts of the earth.” A survey of this word “abussos” in the New Testament shows that it is a synonym for Sheol, a subterranean location where the dead reside. This is most evident in Romans 10:7 where Paul rhetorically asks, “Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)” Here the deep is clearly a reference to the place where the dead reside. And in Luke 8, we find many “devils” (demons or evil spirits) who have not yet been cast into this subterranean region but at the time of the first century still roamed the earth. The parallel account of this incident in Matthew 8, records the “devils” (or demons) asking Jesus “art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” The combination of this question in Matthew with the “devils” petition in Luke indicates that there was an appointed time in which these evil spirits would be cast into Sheol, but prior to which they roamed the earth. This affirms the basic premise found in the Book of Enoch regarding the existence of a type of evil spirit that remained on earth rather than being kept in Sheol. While Matthew and Luke do not specify that these are the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim, the texts are perfectly compatible with that ancient concept. Additionally, regardless of whether or not these New Testament passages intend to connect these evil spirits with Nephilim, both gospel passages do affirm the ancient, Jewish, and biblical nature of the belief of a place within the earth where spirits resided. Although in and of itself this doesn’t necessarily confirm the specific belief that the souls of deceased humans likewise continued to consciously exist within the earth, it is certainly reflective of the overall Jewish belief system regarding these matters.

And as we have seen, this overall Jewish belief system also included the view that after the death of their bodies the spirits of deceased humans resided within the earth where they remained conscious.

Fourth, when exploring the concept of a “familiar spirit” in our previous section, we examined the use of the Hebrew term “owb.” One fact we did not mention earlier is that “owb” occurs 17 times in the Old Testament and 16 of those times it is translated as “familiar spirit.” In 16 cases, the context dictates some reference to the practice described in 1 Samuel 28. But there is one unique occurrence in Job in which context infers something quite different. In Job 32:6, Job’s peer Elihu begins to counsel Job. Verses 6-17 explain that because Elihu was younger than Job’s other advisors, he waited for some time to give the others a chance to speak first. And while declaring that he would no longer keep silent, in verses 18-19 Elihu declares, “I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.”

Strangely, the Hebrew word for “bottles” is “owb.” The use of the word “wine” at the start of verse 19 does warrant such a translation. Yet the “wine” is clearly a metaphor in reference to “the spirit within” him. The Hebrew word for “constraineth” is “tsuwq” (Strong’s Number 06693), which can mean “to press.” So, just as the wine seems ready to burst the bottle, Elihu’s spirit presses him to speak. Now, since we know from earlier in our study that as humans we each have a spirit ourselves (just as we each have a body), there is of course no reason to think Elihu is talking about a familiar spirit by which he is counseling Job. In fact, verse 8 itself attests that “there is a spirit in man that was put there by God,” which is no doubt a reference back to the creation of Adam in Genesis 2. Additionally, the Hebrew word translated as “belly” in Job 32 is “beten” (Strong’s Number 0990), which means “belly, womb, body.” It is noteworthy here that this passage in Job captures the ancient notion of the body as a vessel or container for the spirit within it. This will become relevant again in our next segment below, but for now Job 32 uses “owb” in a way that could further connect the practice of “familiar spirits” in 1 Samuel 28 to demonic possession. It seems possible that ancient pagans may have prayed to the spirits of deceased ancestors, petitioning them for information or help and at times having even their own bodies become vessels to those ancestral spirits. Certainly several of the biblical accounts of demonic possession fit this description in which the evil spirit resides within a human’s body and can even speak through that body.

While modern Christians may typically conceive of “demons” and “evil spirits” as angels, ancient Jews and Christians perceived “demons” and “evil spirits” to be the disembodied spirits of dead “Nephilim,” the offspring of angels and human women. The “familiar,” or perhaps more aptly “familial” spirit, found in Old Testament passages most likely refers to heathen families who had such giants in their ancestral history and, at times, these deceased ancestral spirits would be invoked by their descendants to procure favors or information. But most importantly, all of these historical factors together present a larger picture in which ancient Jews and Christians believed that disembodied spirits of the dead

continued to exist and interact with mankind even after the death of their bodies. This is yet another piece of evidence that the culture reflected and preserved in scripture did not believe that existence or consciousness ceased at the death of the body.

A more expanded analysis of the topic of demon possession, the terms “demon” and “evil spirit,” the Book of Enoch, and Giants can be found in our studies on “Spiritual Warfare,” “Giant Lineages,” and “Cosmology.” However, there is still more evidence to be covered in connection to the concept of demonic possession. To further our examination of that evidence, we will now turn our attention to a statement made from Jesus on the subject.