

Damned!

A Study on the Doctrine of Hell

As of 11/08/20

Part 2- How the Revelation of Hell Developed

Note: Like other Doctrines of Christianity (i.e. the Trinity and God the Holy Spirit)- the understanding of Hell was “progressive”. In other words, as more and more Divine Revelation (Scripture) was produced- the Doctrine of Hell became more precise and clear. So, the ancient Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) contain vague and general references about Hell; while the Christian Scriptures (the New Testament) contain more detailed references.

The Earliest References

Sheol

Jewish believers understood *some* things about Death; and what happens after someone dies. But their understanding was very limited. It seems as though the Jews understood that there was a literal “place” where the dead go. And they called this place, “*Sheol*”. The earliest reference of *Sheol* in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) is found in **Genesis 37:35b**, where the sons of Jacob lied to him about the death of Joseph. And Jacob said,

... **"Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son."** ...

... meaning that his grief would kill him; or send him to the “pit” or the “grave”. So, the *earliest* understanding of *Sheol* was that the dead were placed into a pit or a grave. *Sheol* was also used as a verb- like when Jacob said that thinking his son was dead- would *destroy* him.

But while Hell was not clear- the Jews did seem to have *some* understanding of Heaven. And they also seemed to understand that there was more than one Heaven; or more than one *kind* of Heaven. For example, in **Genesis 1:1** Moses infallibly wrote:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Now it was understood that the “Heavens” to which Moses refers here was the immediate atmosphere that surrounded the earth. That is confirmed by what Moses wrote later:

Genesis 1:6-8

6 Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so.

8 God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

No biblical writer taught that the “Heavens” (as understood in this Passage) was a place where the dead went. And the existence of the other two “Heavens” (outer space and the dwelling place of God) and their different characteristics were revealed to various writers over the entire time that the 66 Books of the Bible were written. For example, about 1,000 before Jesus was born, David said,

Psalm 19:1

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

... the “Heavens” here would refer to what we now call, “outer space”. Then, around 53-54AD., God the Holy Spirit “moved” the Apostle Paul to write this concerning a “third” Heaven:

2Corinthians 12:2-5

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows — such a man was caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I know how such a man — whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows —

4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

5 On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to *my* weaknesses.

... and *this* “Heaven” would be the dwelling place of God.

Now the events recorded for us in **Genesis** happened many hundreds (thousands) of years BEFORE Moses wrote them down- as God sovereignly revealed them to him.¹ And, as far as we know- Moses actually wrote the first five Books of the Bible (**Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy**) around 1,450 BC. So, based on that- it seems that, from the earliest days of their existence- Jews understood that when they die- they went to a literal place called, “*Sheol*”- which to many, would refer to a “dwelling place for the dead”- both “saved” and “lost”.

Now the word, “*Sheol*” is recorded some 67 times in the Bible- all in the Old Testament. And, in every case, *Sheol* meant “the pit” or “the grave”. Sadly, as the King James Bible was produced (1611), the translators rendered the word, “*Sheol*” as “*Hell*”- 31 of those 67 times and, “the *pit*”; or “the *grave*” the other 36 times.

Now they had no reason to do this- but the rendering of “*Sheol*” as “*Hell*” those 31 times- gave rise to much confusion; and, eventually, had to be corrected in the more modern versions of the Bible- which were translated from more accurate (and older) manuscripts.²

Another confusing instance of Hell occurred when the “Apostle’s Creed” was developed (4th Century?). And in the section concerning Jesus, this Creed teaches:

¹ Probably during his time with God on Mt. Sinai.

² Ironically, one of the Issues that the “King James Only” crowd use to try to discredit the modern versions, is that those English Versions, which use more accurate manuscripts, do NOT render Sheol as “Hell”.

[I believe] in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Yet the word, “Hell” here never meant to convey that Jesus actually went to the “place of the damned”. This problem reflects the Reality that, even after much of Christian Doctrine was established- there was still great confusion about Hell. And that is why newer versions of this Creed read:

he descended to the dead

Now the earliest mention of Eternal Damnation in the entire Bible- is actually a Prophecy that Jude quotes from a “non-canonical” book called, “*The Book of Enoch*” or “*1Enoch*”:

Jude 14-15

14 *It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones,*
15 *to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

... where the word, “Judgment” here is understood as “*eternal* Judgment” or “*eternal* Damnation” and NOT some form of “*corrective* Conviction or Discipline”.³ According to history, 1Enoch was written around 300BC or BEFORE the Old Testament was published and put into wide circulation. And several early Church Fathers considered it to be an inspired Old Testament Book. Around 200 AD., Tertullian⁴ wrote that 1Enoch had been rejected by the majority of the Jews because it contained Prophecies which clearly pertained to Jesus.

Another ancient Event, that was recorded many years after it actually occurred- was the **Book of Job**. Based on the details of this Book- we know that Job actually lived during the Age of the Patriarchs (**Genesis**). Yet, at some point after Job lived- somebody else (Jeremiah?) infallibly wrote the Events down. And in **Job 17:11-16**- Job said,

11 *"My days are past, my plans are torn apart, Even the wishes of my heart.*

12 *"They make night into day, saying, 'The light is near,' in the presence of darkness.*

³ The entire **Book of Jude** was written to expose both the heretical Teachings and the characteristics of the heretics themselves. Jude pronounces an eternal Damnation on those who would pervert the Gospel. The Prophecy of Enoch was used by Jude to demonstrate that this Divine Condemnation against both the wayward Teachings and the heretics themselves has always existed.

⁴ Tertullian (150- 240AD) was an early Christian apologist who defended the Faith against the Gnostics. He is considered to be the “Father” of Latin Christianity and the “Founder” of Western Theology.

- 13** "If I look for Sheol as my home, I make my bed in the darkness;
14 If I call to the pit, 'You are my father'; To the worm, 'my mother and my sister';
15 Where now is my hope? And who regards my hope?
16 "Will it go down with me to Sheol? Shall we together go down into the dust?"

Here, we see some of the limitations that Job operated under as regarding the after-life. Very little concerning either Hell or Heaven. And in verses 14-16- Job didn't think that there was any Hope beyond *Sheol*. So, in Job's mind- *Sheol* was permanent. Yet in Chapter 33, when Elihu began to teach Job- this man seemed to have much *more* Revelation about what happens after death:

Job 33:12-33

- 12** "Behold, let me tell you, you are not right in this, For God is greater than man.
13 "Why do you complain against Him That He does not give an account of all His doings?
14 "Indeed God speaks once, Or twice, *yet* no one notices it.
15 "In a dream, a vision of the night, When sound sleep falls on men, While they slumber in their beds,
16 Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction,
17 That He may turn man aside *from his* conduct, And keep man from pride;
18 He keeps back his soul from the pit, And his life from passing over into Sheol.
19 "Man is also chastened with pain on his bed, And with unceasing complaint in his bones;
20 So that his life loathes bread, And his soul favorite food.
21 "His flesh wastes away from sight, And his bones which were not seen stick out.
22 "Then his soul draws near to the pit, And his life to those who bring death.
23 "If there is an angel *as* mediator for him, One out of a thousand, To remind a man what is right for him,
24 Then let him be gracious to him, and say, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom';
25 Let his flesh become fresher than in youth, Let him return to the days of his youthful vigor;
26 Then he will pray to God, and He will accept him, That he may see His face with joy, And He may restore His righteousness to man.
27 "He will sing to men and say, 'I have sinned and perverted what is right, And it is not proper for me.
28 'He has redeemed my soul from going to the pit, And my life shall see the light.'
29 "Behold, God does all these oftentimes with men,
30 To bring back his soul from the pit, That he may be enlightened with the light of life.
31 "Pay attention, O Job, listen to me; Keep silent, and let me speak.
32 "Then if you have anything to say, answer me; Speak, for I desire to justify you.

33 "If not, listen to me; Keep silent, and I will teach you wisdom."

Now even though they are vague- Elihu made several references in this Passage that show us that he had much more information about the after-life than Job did. For example:

- **Verse 18: He [God] keeps back his soul [the redeemed] from the pit, And his life from passing over into Sheol**
- **Verse 22: Then his soul draws near to the pit, And his life to those who bring death.**
- **Verses 23&24: "If there is an angel *as* mediator for him, One out of a thousand, To remind a man what is right for him, Then let him be gracious to him, and say, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom';**
- **Verse 25&26: Let his flesh become fresher than in youth, Let him return to the days of his youthful vigor; Then he will pray to God, and He will accept him, That he may see His face with joy, And He may restore His righteousness to man.**
- **Verses 28-30: 'He has redeemed my soul from going to the pit, And my life shall see the light.' "Behold, God does all these oftentimes with men, To bring back his soul from the pit, That he may be enlightened with the light of life.**

Here, Elihu makes vague references about a Mediator (Jesus); and a Resurrection; and of the dead dwelling in God's Presence- forever.

Now, we really don't know where the word, *Sheol* came from. It is a synonym of another Hebrew word, "*shahat*", which means: *pit or destruction*. Some have taught that the word, *Sheol* was borrowed from the Assyrian-Babylonian language, when the children of Israel were taken into Captivity (586BC). But this can't be proven conclusively.

Abaddon

Abaddon is a Hebrew word (the Greek equivalent: *Apollyon*), which means: *death; doom; or destruction*. It is also used as a name of the "angel of the abyss" in **The Revelation 9:7-11:**

7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.

8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like *the teeth* of lions.

9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.

10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.

11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

But in addition to the Apostle John- Solomon; the sons of Korah; and Job all understood that *Abaddon* was both a synonym for Destruction and a demon:

Job 26:5-14

- 5 "The departed spirits tremble Under the waters and their inhabitants.
6 "Naked is Sheol before Him, And Abaddon has no covering.
7 "He stretches out the north over empty space And hangs the earth on nothing.
8 "He wraps up the waters in His clouds, And the cloud does not burst under them.
9 "He obscures the face of the full moon And spreads His cloud over it.
10 "He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters At the boundary of light and darkness.
11 "The pillars of heaven tremble And are amazed at His rebuke.
12 "He quieted the sea with His power, And by His understanding He shattered Rahab.
13 "By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent.
14 "Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; And how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?"

Job 28:20-28

- 20 "Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding?
21 "Thus it is hidden from the eyes of all living And concealed from the birds of the sky.
22 "Abaddon and Death say, 'With our ears we have heard a report of it.'
23 "God understands its way, And He knows its place.
24 "For He looks to the ends of the earth And sees everything under the heavens.
25 "When He imparted weight to the wind And meted out the waters by measure,
26 When He set a limit for the rain And a course for the thunderbolt,
27 Then He saw it and declared it; He established it and also searched it out.
28 "And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.'"

Psalm 88:10-12

- 10 Will You perform wonders for the dead? Will the departed spirits rise *and* praise You? Selah.
11 Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave, Your faithfulness in Abaddon?
12 Will Your wonders be made known in the darkness? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Proverbs 15:11

Sheol and Abaddon *lie open* before the Lord, How much more the hearts of men!

Proverbs 27:20

Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.

Gehenna

Many of the rabbis; teachers; and other religious leaders, who operated under the Old Testament- developed a rather elaborate understanding of this word. Literally, *Gehenna* was *Ge-hinnom* or the “*Valley of Hinnom*”- where some of the kings of Judah sacrificed their children to false gods by fire⁵. *Ge- Hinnom* was a valley that surrounded Jerusalem’s “Old City”- including Mount Zion. It met and merged with the Kidron Valley near the south-eastern corner of Jerusalem.

Joshua 15:8

Then the border went up the valley of Ben-hinnom to the slope of the Jebusite on the south (that is, Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain which is before the valley of Hinnom to the west, which is at the end of the valley of Rephaim toward the north.

Joshua 18:16

The border went down to the edge of the hill which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is in the valley of Rephaim northward; and it went down to the valley of Hinnom, to the slope of the Jebusite southward, and went down to En-rogel.

Nehemiah 11:30

Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, Azekah and its towns. So they encamped from Beersheba as far as the valley of Hinnom.

2Chronicles 28:1-3

1 Ahaz *was* twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do right in the sight of the Lord as David his father *had done*.

2 But he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; he also made molten images for the Baals.

3 Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel.

2Chronicles 33:1-6

1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem.

2 He did evil in the sight of the Lord according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord dispossessed before the sons of Israel.

3 For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he also erected altars for the Baals and made Asherim, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.

4 He built altars in the house of the Lord of which the Lord had said, "My name shall be in Jerusalem forever."

5 For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.

⁵ *Watson E. Mills; Roger Aubrey Bullard (1990). Mercer Dictionary of the Bible. Mercer University Press. p. 319.*

6 He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him *to anger*.

Now the “*Valley of Hinnom*” (*Ge-Hinnom/Gehenna*); or the “*Valley of the Sons of Hinnom*” (*Ben-Hinnom*) was also known as “*Topheth*”.

Jeremiah 7:30-34

30 "For the sons of Judah have done that which is evil in My sight," declares the Lord, "they have set their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it.

31 "They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind.

32 "Therefore, behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when it will no longer be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no *other* place.

33 "The dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth; and no one will frighten *them* away.

34 "Then I will make to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; for the land will become a ruin.

Now because of all the terrible Sin that was carried out in the “*Valley of Hinnom*”, the place was considered to be perpetually cursed by God. And as a result- the *Valley of Hinnom* or *Ge-hinnom* (*Gehenna*) was considered to be the “Destination of the Wicked”. So, for a person to “go to *Gehenna*” was to “go to the *Destination of the Wicked*”.

Now it is important to understand that, to the Old Testament Jew, *Gehenna* was NOT Hell- but, originally a valley used to dump refuse and the unimportant people- along with the lepers and the dead, who were poor. That is why it got the reputation as a Place where there was... “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*”.

Then, in the years just prior to the Coming of Jesus, *Gehenna* became known as a place where a person is judged based on the deeds he carried out in this life. As the rabbis *continued* to develop this Concept- *Gehenna* became known as a place where a person becomes fully aware of his own Sins. The Kabbalah⁶ explained *Gehenna* as a “waiting room” or “entry way” for ALL the dead (not merely the Wicked).

Interestingly, for the most part, old Testament rabbis didn’t believe in a Place- where sinners were damned by God throughout all Eternity. So, even though *Gehenna* became known as the “Destination of the Wicked”, the rabbis didn’t believe that the torment in *Gehenna* was permanent. So, the longest that a Jew was said to be in *Gehenna* was 11 months; with an additional month added for the *extremely* Wicked.

Now even though it is not specifically mentioned by name; the Jews, who read **Isaiah 66:24** understood that the Prophet was referring to *Gehenna* when he said,

⁶ An ancient Jewish mystical cult

Then they will go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die And their fire will not be quenched; And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind."

And this understanding was confirmed when Jesus used the very same phrases that Isaiah used here- to describe Hell in **Mark 9:43-48**:

- 43 "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire,**
44 [where *THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.*]
45 "If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell,
46 [where *THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.*]
47 "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell,
48 where *THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.*

During the reign of King Josiah- the Prophet Jeremiah *commanded* him to destroy the shrines in *Topheth*; and to put an end to the Sin that was commonly carried out in *Gehenna*. **2Kings 23:4-12** tells us that Josiah did that:

- 4 Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.**
5 He did away with the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the surrounding area of Jerusalem, also those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations and to all the host of heaven.
6 He brought out the Asherah from the house of the Lord outside Jerusalem to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and ground *it* to dust, and threw its dust on the graves of the common people.
7 He also broke down the houses of the *male* cult prostitutes which *were* in the house of the Lord, where the women were weaving hangings for the Asherah.
8 Then he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; and he broke down the high places of the gates which *were* at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which *were* on one's left at the city gate.
9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not go up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers.
10 He also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech.

11 He did away with the horses which the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the official, which *was* in the precincts; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

12 The altars which *were* on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, the king broke down; and he smashed them there and threw their dust into the brook Kidron.

Yet, it was not enough. And God anointed Jeremiah to pronounce Judgment against Josiah and Jerusalem:

Jeremiah 19

1 Thus says the Lord, "Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar, and *take* some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests.

2 "Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you,

3 and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle.

4 "Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had *ever* known, and *because* they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent

5 and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it *ever* enter My mind;

6 therefore, behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter.

7 "I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.

8 "I will also make this city a desolation and an *object of* hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters.

9 "I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them."

10 "Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you

11 and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no *other* place for burial.

12 "This is how I will treat this place and its inhabitants," declares the Lord, "so as to make this city like Topheth.

13 "The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place Topheth, because of all the houses on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host and poured out drink offerings to other gods.'"

14 Then Jeremiah came from Topheth, where the Lord had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the Lord's house and said to all the people:

15 "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am about to bring on this city and all its towns the entire calamity that I have declared against it, because they have stiffened their necks so as not to heed My words.'"

The Targums

The Targums were an ancient Aramaic translation (paraphrase) of the 39 Books of the Old Testament. And in the verses relating to either Resurrection or the Fate of the Wicked- the Targums always used the word, "*Ge-hinnom*". In the Targums' translation of **Isaiah 66**- they used the word, "*Ge-hinnom*" or the phrase, the "*Second Death*". This makes the Targums translation more in line with John Mark's Gospel Record, where he quotes Jesus as saying,

Mark 9:43-48:

43 "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire,

44 [where *THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.*]

45 "If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell,

46 [where *THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.*]

47 "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell,

48 where *THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.*

Rabbinical Judaism

The picture of *Gehenna* as the place of Punishment or Destruction of the Wicked occurred frequently in classic rabbinic sources- prior to the development of the New Testament. In addition- the Jews created a name for the "after-life": *Olam Ha-Ba*- (*the world to come*), where ALL the dead Jews went- *unless* they were especially Wicked. The Mishnah⁷ went so far as to *exclude* seven biblical characters from having any part of the "world to come" (*Olam Ha-Ba*): Jeroboam, Ahab, Menasseh, Doeg the Edomite, Ahitophel, Balaam, and Gehazi.

The very *worst* part of *Gehenna* is called: *Tzoah Rotachat*.

The traditional Jewish explanation of how a burning rubbish heap in the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem gave rise to the idea of a fiery *Gehenna* of Divine Judgment- is attributed to Rabbi David Kimhi's⁸ 13th Century Commentary on **Psalm 27:13**:

I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living.

In that Commentary, Kimhi maintained that...

⁷ The Mishnah (from the Hebrew verb, *to study*) is the first major work of rabbinic literature and the first written collection of the Jewish oral traditions known as the "Oral Torah".

⁸ David Kimhi (1160-1235AD) was a medieval rabbi, commentator, philosopher, and grammarian.

“... in this loathsome “Valley of Hinnom” (*Gehenna*)- fires were kept burning *perpetually* to consume the filth and cadavers thrown into it.”

... and Lloyd R. Bailey's book, "*Gehenna: The Topography of Hell*"⁹ holds a similar view.

There is evidence that the southwest shoulder of this valley was a burial location with numerous burial chambers that were reused by generations of families from as early as the seventh until the fifth century BC. The use of this area for tombs continued into the first centuries BC and AD. By 70 AD, the area was not only a burial site but also a place for cremation of the dead with the arrival of the Tenth Roman Legion, who were the only group known to practice cremation in this region.¹⁰

Over time- *Gehenna* was deemed to be accursed by God- and an image of the “Place of Destruction” in Jewish folklore. Eventually the Hebrew term, “*Ge-hinnom*” became a *figurative* name for the place of “spiritual purification” for the wicked dead in Judaism. According to most Jewish sources, the “Period of Purification” or Punishment was limited- and every Sabbath day was excluded from any Punishment. After this, the soul will move on to *Olam Ha-Ba* (*the world to come*), be destroyed, or continue to exist in a state of “consciousness of remorse”.¹¹

So, *Gehenna* eventually became a “metonym”¹² for "Hell" due to its morbid prominence in Jewish religious texts.

Maimonides¹³ declared, in his “*13 Principles of Faith*”, that...

“... the descriptions of *Gehenna*, as a place of Punishment in rabbinic literature, were pedagogically motivated inventions to encourage respect of the Torah Commandments by Mankind, which had been regarded as immature.”¹⁴

Maimonides taught that instead of being sent to *Gehenna*- the souls of the Wicked would simply be annihilated.¹⁵

With all of this folklore, superstition, and Man-made Teaching from the Jewish “scholars” it is no wonder why Jesus and the Apostle saw the need to produce very detailed Information about Hell to believers in the 1st Century.

Hades

Many people are confused about why there are so many names for “*Hell*” in the Bible. But there are occasions where the problem lies in the language used at the time rather than an actual distinction of what the writer was talking about. For example, the word, “*Hades*” is nothing more than a Greek translation of the Hebrew word, “*Sheol*”.

Back in the 1st Century (when Jesus was on the earth), the average Jew of Palestine didn't speak, read, or write in Hebrew. Jesus Himself spoke in Aramaic- *not* Hebrew. Many years

⁹ Lloyd R. Bailey, "*Gehenna: The Topography of Hell*," *Biblical Archeologist* 49 [1986]: p. 189

¹⁰ Gabriel Barkay, "*The Riches of Ketef Hinnom*." *Biblical Archaeological Review* 35:4-5 (2005): 22–35, 122–26.

¹¹ "Judaism 101: *Olam Ha-Ba: The Afterlife*".

¹² A Metonym is a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is referred to by the name of something closely associated with that thing or concept.

¹³ Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides) was a medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher, who became one of the most prolific and influential Torah scholars of the Middle Ages.

¹⁴ Maimonides' *Introduction to Perek Helek*, ed. and transl. by Maimonides Heritage Center, p. 3–4.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 22-23.

before the Romans came to subjugate them, the Jews were conquered and ruled by the Greeks. And the Books of the Old Testament (the Jewish Scriptures) were all written in Koine Greek. This Greek translation of the Old Testament Books is called the “*Septuagint*”¹⁶. So, when the reader sees, the word, “*Hades*”, he should think, “*Sheol*”.

The Concept of Hell During the Earthly Ministry of Jesus

When Jesus walked the earth, the concept of “*Hell*” in the mind of the average Jew had become very convoluted and confusing. So, part of Jesus’ Ministry was to proclaim the Truth about both Death and Hell. One of the most vivid Parables that Jesus told had to do with this subject:

Luke 16:19-31

19 "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day.

20 "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,

21 and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

22 "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

23 "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.'

27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house —

28 for I have five brothers — in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

30 "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'

31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

¹⁶ The Septuagint (lit. “from the 70” or “the Translation from the 70”) was the product of Jewish scholars from each of the twelve Tribes, who each produced Greek translations of the Books of the Old Testament around the third Century BC.

Now, it appears that Jesus was teaching that “*Hades*” was comprised of two “places” or two “sections” or two different “areas”:

1. Abraham’s Bosom
2. The Place of Torment

... so, according to this Parable, everyone dies and goes to “*Hades*”. The saved go to a place or section or area *within* “*Hades*” called, “*Abraham’s Bosom*”; while the lost go to another area or section of “*Hades*”, called, the “*Place of Torment*”.

The term, “*Abraham’s Bosom*” was meant to convey Mercy; Kindness; and Hope- while the “*Place of Torment*” conveyed Fear. There isn’t much written (that has been found) to verify exactly what Jesus meant by what He said in this Parable. But it *seems* that Jesus was teaching that saved Jews went to “*Abraham’s Bosom*” when they died and unsaved Jews went to the “*Place of Torment*”.

“*Abraham’s Bosom*” consisted of Comfort (v.25); while the “*Place of Torment*” consisted of “Agony” and flames of Fire (v. 24). It also seems that people, who went to the “*Place of Torment*”, were *separated* from those in “*Abraham’s Bosom*” by a “**great, fixed** (permanent) **chasm**” (v.26). Jesus also said that “*Abraham’s Bosom*” was “**far away**” from the “*Place of Torment*” (v. 23)- yet it also seems that the people, being in “**agony**” in the “*Place of Torment*” could actually see those in “*Abraham’s Bosom*” (v.23).

Now the imagery here is clear: saved people die and are comforted; while unsaved people are tormented in agony in the flames of fire. And much has been written and said about this Parable. Some groups believe and teach that the way Jesus describes the After-Life here is the way things exist even now. That is highly unlikely, as this occurred BEFORE the Resurrection; and Gentiles of the 1st Century would not have taken much Comfort in knowing they would die and go to Abraham’s Bosom.

But we must NOT be dogmatic about this- because there are at least three ways this Parable can be understood:

1. Jesus may have been describing the After-Life as it actually existed
2. Jesus may have been describing the After-Life as the average Jew of that day *thought* it existed
3. Jesus was simply using this Parable to make the point of how lost people are justified.

... to be continued

