

SHABBAT PESACH
EXODUS 33:12-34:26; EZEKIEL 37:1-14; ICORINTHIANS 5:1-8
THE RESURRECTION OF OUR MESIAH YESHUA

notes by Tim Hegg

One can only imagine what the soul's outlook was for the *talmidim* of Yeshua as they entered into the Shabbat that week of *Chag HaMatzot* (Feast of Unleavened Bread), the dramatic week in which Yeshua's crucifixion had taken place. Dead, His lifeless body secured in the tomb for two days, the confusion and despair of His followers was apparent. After the Shabbat two of them were on the road heading to Emmaus, and their words no doubt characterized the general feeling of the *talmidim*: "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened" (Luke 24:21). "We were hoping..." are words of despair—of hope that had long since passed. Even more, the fact that it was the third day, the day on which He had promised to raise, seemed to seal the inevitable fact that He was not the One they had hoped He was. They had begun to resign themselves to the ugly fact that He was, like so many before Him, to be numbered among the gainsayers—someone blinded by the imagination of His own self-made delusions of grandeur. How could He be the Messiah? It now seemed clear that He had failed. And what of the "kingdom" about which He constantly made reference in His teachings? And His strong words about the salvation He would effect—perhaps these, like the rest, were only the whisper of an overly fruitful imagination.

And so the *talmidim* prepared for the Shabbat. But the joy of the day must have been evasive. There, at the *erev* Shabbat table, the One most loved and followed, was missing. He, like all of the others before Him who had claimed to be sent by the Almighty, lay lifeless in the tomb.

It seems that it has become fashionable in Christian circles to berate the *talmidim* for their lack of faith. If they were despondent, then that only proves they lacked faith. And, of course, this is true. Yeshua Himself scolds them because they were "foolish and slow of heart to believe" (Luke 24:25). Being deficient in their understanding, they were unwilling to immediately act upon the words of the prophets. But let's be honest: they had come to the final test of their faith, for if they continued to follow Him, and even proclaim Him to be the Messiah, not only would they have been mocked (for who proclaims a Messiah who has succumbed to the clutches of death?) but they also would have placed themselves in a position to face the same treatment as He had. They were confronted with the ultimate choice: follow and most likely die for their confession, or admit they had been wrong and live out their lives in humiliation among their friends and family who had mocked them for following the Yeshua in the first place. Before we point our finger in judgment at the *talmidim*, we had better evaluate whether our current faith would fare much better.

But if we were to be in their shoes, preparing for the Shabbat during the darkest week of our faith, where would we turn? How would we strengthen our faith in the face of what seemed like certain failure? I would hope that we would turn to the Scriptures, and that is exactly where Yeshua takes them. He could have argued from experience, for all He would have had to do was to uncover His identity to them, and prove by His very presence that He had risen. But most likely the very reason He hid His identity as He walked and talked with them *was so that He could teach them to rely upon the Scriptures as their sure foundation for faith*. After all, those who would believe through their teaching would not have the benefit of a personal, face-to-face conversation with the risen Messiah. They would have to believe the Scriptures. And so He takes them there as a matter of fundamental principle.

Peter understood this. For having noted that he was one of those who witnessed the unleashed glory of Yeshua on the mountain top, he writes: “we have the confirmed prophetic word” (2Peter 1:19). Even his witness of Yeshua’s glory was only understandable in light of the Scriptures.

Does the Tanach teach about the resurrection, and specifically of the resurrection of the Messiah?

The Resurrection in the Tanach

1. Genesis 22

We may first note the words of Abraham to his servants as he and Isaac turn to go up to the mountain designated by God. He promises both will return! Here’s what the author of Hebrews gets from that:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.” He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

Abraham believed that God would resurrect Isaac, not in the final day, but immediately, because the promise depended upon Isaac having children. It was this “resurrection faith” that gave to Abraham the ability to follow God against all odds, to trust Him for the impossible.

2. Job 19:23-27

Job had lost all hope of living (17:1, 11-16). His only hope was therefore cast upon his vindication *after he died*, presupposing the resurrection. Some have suggested that verse 26 is too difficult to affirm dogmatically his belief in the resurrection:

Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God...

“From my flesh:” does it mean “apart from his body” or “from inside his body?” Verse 27 should be conclusive:

Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another...

But earlier (14:7) Job wrote:

For there is hope for a tree, When it is cut down, that it will sprout again, (וְהָלִיף) And its shoots will not fail.

The picture is obvious: often around the base of a fallen tree, shoots will spring up, one after the other, as a continuation of the life of that tree. Job applies this to mankind (14:14)

If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait until my sprouting (וְהָלִיף) comes.

Using the same Hebrew root (חָיָה, “to renew,” “to sprout afresh”) Job expected his readers to connect the two verses. Even as shoots spring forth from the stump of tree that has been cut down, so a man who dies will also live again.

3. *Qohelet*

Solomon believed the same thing. In Qohelet 3:17 he argued that people would stand before God as their judge in that future day of appointed judgment:

I said to myself, “God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,” for a time for every matter and for every deed is there. For the spirit of man goes upward, but the life of the beast goes into the ground (3:21-22).

4. *Proverbs*

In the Proverbs of Solomon, three texts point clearly to the belief in the resurrection:

The wicked is thrust down by his wrongdoing, But the righteous has a refuge when he dies. (Prov 14:32)

The path of life leads upward for the wise thus escaping Sheol below. [The last line is a literal translation of the Hebrew]. (Prov 15:24)

5. *Isaiah*

Isaiah gives explicit teaching of the future resurrection:

Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. (Isaiah 26:19)

While the righteous have their names written in HaShem’s book (12:1-2), Isaiah taught that the wicked would be resurrected to eternal shame and contempt, that is, their doom (Isaiah 24:22; 66:24). The teaching of Yeshua to the same effect (cf. John 5:29) is not something new, or Hellenistic, but simply the reaffirmation of the prophet’s teaching.

6. *The Psalms* (only a few examples of the many instances. For a full treatment, see Dahood, *Psalms III* [Anchor Bible], pp. xliiff.)

The hymn book of the Hebrews is replete with references to the resurrection. Dahood has shown the in certain contexts the Hebrew word “life” in the Psalms should be understood as “eternal life.”

I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of Adonai in the land of the living [land of eternal life]. (Ps 27:13)

For You have delivered my soul from death, Indeed my feet from stumbling, So that I may walk before God In the light of the living. (Ps 56:13)

For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever [eternal life]. (Ps 133:3)

Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of Adonai for length of days. (Ps 23:6)

7. *Daniel*

The prophecy of Daniel makes clear references to the future resurrection of the dead, and confirms the earlier words of Isaiah that the righteous will be raised to eternal happiness, but the unrighteous to eternal doom:

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. (Dan 12:2)

And a similar promise is made to Daniel himself:

But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age. (Dan 12:13)

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the Tanach was clear in its teaching, that the dead would rise again, and that life after the grave was eternal. Furthermore, the Tanach makes it clear that the eternal life of the righteous was one of joy and bliss, while that of the wicked was one of doom.

But did the Tanach teach specifically about the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Once again, the answer is “yes.”

Resurrection of the Messiah

In two passages that speak in terms of the Messiah’s death, resurrection is likewise included.

For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. (Ps 16:10)

The idea that Adonai’s Holy One would not be left in the grave to decay is the meaning of the text. And while the Psalm may have an immediate reference to David, it is clear that its grand words go well beyond the King David to his greater Son, Messiah. Indeed, Psalm 16 was interpreted messianically by the Jewish sages. And we know that Peter agreed with this interpretation, for in his sermon on the day of Shavuot (Acts 2) he quotes Psalm 16 to prove the resurrection of Yeshua as proof positive that He is the one spoken of in the Psalm (cf. Acts 2:25ff).

In the most explicit chapter detailing the death of the Messiah for His people (Isaiah 53), the dying servant of Adonai atones for the sins of His people through His death, and is put in a grave. But the text is also clear that He does not stay dead: He sees His “offspring,” He prolongs His days, and the pleasure of God is upon Him. What is more, in v. 11 the proper Hebrew text reads: “he will see *light* and be satisfied.” (This is the reading of the Qumran Isaiah as well as that of the Lxx. With this strength of textual witnesses, it seems very warranted to correct the MT by including the word “light.”) The motif of light vs. darkness is often used in the Tanach to contrast death and life.

Psalm 23 connects death with darkness, as does Isaiah 9:1. Job, on the other hand, uses “light” to signify life (Job 28:30, 33) and to “see light” is opposite of going down to the “pit” (grave). Thus, when Isaiah prophesies that He would “see light,” it is a poetic reference to life after the grave. How else would He see His offspring than by coming back to life after His death?

Thus, even in this short cursory survey of the Tanach, it is clear that the teaching of resurrection is well embedded in the text. Moreover, the fact that the Messiah would suffer death and raise from the dead is also taught. There is little doubt that this was the teaching of Yeshua to the *talmidim* as they walked together on the road to Emmaus. And the lesson we learn is powerful: if we trust what the Scriptures say, we will have a sure foundation upon which to build our lives and be empowered to sanctify the Name of HaShem upon the earth.

The Pivotal Point in our Faith: Yeshua’s Resurrection

As the Shabbat was ending, that Sabbath that ended the dark week for the *talmidim*, an event occurred that forever established and confirmed the work of God in saving sinners. That, of course, was the resurrection of Yeshua just as He had foretold. It has become so commonplace to those of us who have put our faith in Him, that perhaps at times we miss the absolute earthshaking ramifications of it. But if we could try to put ourselves into the sandals of those early *talmidim*, perhaps we can gain a new appreciation. Once they had come to realize that He was not dead, but that He was alive—this being confirmed by His actually standing in their midst (invading the walls of their hiding place), their faith was cemented. No one else could be the Messiah, and no one else could be the Savior. He was the promised One of Israel! He was the one of whom the prophets spoke! It was Yeshua and none other. And therefore, His teaching was HaShem’s teaching, and His *halachah* was that of the Father. He was to be followed, obeyed, served, and proclaimed to all. At last the long-awaited salvation of the Lord had appeared, and salvation was forever sure in Him.

We were not there. We did not behold Him as He entered the room of the doubting *talmidim*. We have only the testimony of Scripture. The question comes to us, however, with the same impact as it did on that *havdalah* of Shabbat Pesach: can we deny the risen Messiah?

Perhaps nothing stands as more key and pivotal in our faith than the risen Yeshua. This is for several reasons:

1. *His resurrection validates all He said and did.*

Even as the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place on Yom Kippur, dressed only in his linen robes and therefore without the bells on the hem of his outer garment, so Yeshua in His death entered to effect atonement for His people. Even as the people were unsure if the offering was received by the Almighty until the High Priest came back out of the Most Holy Place, so the sacrifice of Yeshua is not reckoned as satisfactory until He returns alive. His resurrection, therefore, is the Father’s declaration that the payment was received in full. We know that we are forgiven because Yeshua lives: His sacrifice was received.

What is more, that He rose from the dead likewise validates Yeshua Himself as the genuine Messiah Who has the power to overcome death. His resurrection validates His person and message, and means that following Him is to follow the very Messiah of HaShem. We may expect, therefore, that HaShem’s blessing will be upon us, for as we follow Yeshua, we are obeying His

Son. Moreover, His resurrection proves that we too will rise from the dead for He is the “first fruits from the grave” (1Cor 15:20–23)

2. *We may be confident that we will be received by the Father as those who stand righteous before Him.*

Yeshua’s resurrection means that He continues to live in order to assure the full application of His sacrifice for His chosen ones. We may rest assured that no enemy will prevail against us in accusations before the throne of God’s justice, for our advocate lives! He always lives to make intercession for us (Heb 7:25). He is not dependent upon someone else to finish the work of salvation. He lives to make sure that the full and complete redemption He effected at the cross is applied eternally to His people.

3. *Yeshua’s resurrection gives clear purpose in our lives*

The disregard for life in our society and world is nothing less than the inevitable fruit of humanism—a godless philosophy that has all but conquered our society. First seen in the garden of Eden, it has infected mankind in every generation. We see this godless worldview in our own society, in which the standards of God are mocked and discarded as unbecoming to the modern intellect. Humanism makes man the center, the goal, and the reason. It disregards or even discounts God. What does it produce? A society that believes in randomness, and therefore an existence without eternal meaning. The music and art of the ‘60’s and ‘70’s was prophetic of what we would experience in the 21st century. Life has no meaning but to express its lack of meaning. All that is sacred is heaped on the rubbish pile of man’s lusts. Marriage and family disappear, and a society numbed by self-indulgence spirals headlong into a hopeless eternity.

Into that darkness we come with the message of a risen Savior—a Savior Who gives meaning to life (to sanctify the Name upon the earth), Who assures us of friendship and help, Who meets our needs, and stands as proof positive that those who have trusted in Him will, like Him, rise from the dead, for He is the first fruits. Our lives do not stop here—we are now preparing for eternity. In Paul’s great chapter on the resurrection (1Cor 15), he notes that apart from the resurrection of Yeshua, we are of all people most miserable. But he also notes that because of His resurrection, we are most blessed. Let us rest our faith squarely upon the Scriptures, and serve Him in the power of resurrected life.