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The Doctrine of Resurrection in the Old Testament

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1. Introduction

In his heart man aspires towards permanence. A basic wish of the Israelite was for long life (Gen 15:15; 35:29). The idea of afterlife was part of the belief structure of Judaism long before the Christian times, but the forms which this belief has assumed and the modes in which it has been expressed have varied greatly and differed from period to period. The Hebrew Bible is comparatively inexplicit on the fate of the individual after death. The standard view in ancient Israel was that the dead descend to the region of the underworld generally called Sheol, where they dwell in a shadowy existence.¹ The idea of life after death which developed in apocalyptic Judaism was to become an absolutely central truth for Christianity.² While the language of the Old Testament is more concerned with community survival than individual immortality, there is nonetheless a strong consciousness that the person is not utterly annihilated at death. This article seeks to give an expose of the idea of resurrection and immortality in the Old Testament.

2. Jewish idea of immortality

The Jewish idea of immortality is based on two things faith in a just retribution and hope of an afterlife. Divine justice was an essential element in the Israelite religion. Yahweh deals with each person according to his just desert.³ God will redress the injustices and even death which the just suffer at the hands of the wicked by raising the just from the dead. According to Jewish thought, the resurrection to life is an event that would occur at the end of the

¹ J. J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia: Minneapolis, 1993, p.394.

² J. M. Lindenberger, Daniel 12:1-4 in Context, *Int* 39 (1985) p.185 (181-186).

³ P. Benoit and R. Murphy (Ed), *Immortality and Resurrection*, USA: Herder and Herder, 1970, p.34

world, not within history. It was thought to involve mankind as a whole, not just an isolated individual. This is in contradistinction to Jesus' resurrection which occurred both within history and involved a single man. The belief in the resurrection began to develop toward the end of the Biblical Period. By the end of the Second Temple Period it had developed into a fundamental dogma of the Pharisees. However, the doctrine, as R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and G. Wigoder remark, "proved a stumbling block to those thinkers who conceived of eschatological perfection in a more purely spiritual way, and to whom the heavenly bliss of the soul seemed a more worthy consummation than the possibility of continued life in a material body."⁴

There are numerous texts in the Hebrew Scriptures which attest to the belief in life beyond death. Some passages, however, contain explicit references to resurrection of the dead. The Old Testament is also replete with passages which talk about bodily translations of some special legendary personages, like Enoch and Elijah, into heaven,⁵ accounts of the resuscitation of the dead in the Elijah and Elisha traditions,⁶ and the belief that the living can communicate with the spirit of the dead.⁷ All these provide specific indications of an early belief that the soul of a human being lives on beyond the death of the person. Below is a presentation of the early translation narratives.

2.1 The Translation Narratives

Two narratives which reveal the Old Testament worldview regarding afterlife are the passages which relate the translations of Enoch and Elijah in Gen 5:21-24 and 2 Kings 2:1-11. These passages reveal, first of all, an Old Testament hope of

⁴R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and G. Wigoder (ed), *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966, p.331.

⁵Gen 5:24, 2 Kings 2:11.

⁶1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-36.

⁷1 Sam 28:12-20.

immortality, even if only for the righteous few. The Book of Genesis recounts the story of the legendary Enoch, the seventh of the line of antediluvian patriarchs.⁸ The narrative indicates that Enoch did not merely live a long life with many descendants, which is the ultimate hope of the righteous Hebrew of the Patriarchal age; he was taken, bodily, heaven during his lifetime.⁹ This is a very early indication of a belief in a bodily immortality. Twice in the Genesis account Enoch is said to have “walked with God” (Gen 5:21-24). The phrase “walked with God” also indicates that Enoch lived righteously.¹⁰ The passage says Enoch did not experience a normal death. This is confirmed by the final remark, “because God took him.” Elijah too is portrayed as having been taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:1,5,9,10). The translation of Elijah to heaven led to the tradition that his work was not finished. He would one day return before the Day of the Lord.¹¹

In both accounts, the emphasis is placed on the quality of the relationship between God and Enoch or Elijah. It is not simply that they lived blamelessly or righteously, but also that they had special fellowship with God. Immortality, then, is intimately tied to communion with God as shown in both of these translation accounts. The translation narratives reveal that the Hebrew hope for immortality included both body and soul. Sheol could not be the ultimate hope, for those in Sheol had no corporality, and corporality was a key part of existence in the Old Testament.

⁸E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, New York: Doubleday, 1964, p.43.

⁹R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and G. Wigoder (ed), *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966, p.129; cf also G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1, Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987, p.128; T. E. Fretheim, *The Book of Genesis*, NIB 1, L. E. Keck (Ed), Nashville: Abingdon, 1994, p380.

¹⁰G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1, Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987, p.127.

¹¹T. L. Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets*, New York: Paulist Press, 2007, p.93.

Therefore the ultimate Old Testament hope was not for an immortal spiritual existence, but in an immortal corporeal existence. Elijah and Enoch were not merely granted immortality; they were granted an endless bodily existence with the Lord. The next evidence is found in a text that proves that the living can communicate with the living spirits of the dead.

2.2 Saul and the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:12-20)

The First Book of Samuel 28:12-20 tells how King Saul consulted the witch of Endor to get guidance, and to learn the future by necromancy. Saul wished to consult the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel and asked the witch of Endor to call up the spirit of Samuel. Saul's intent in calling up the spirit of Samuel was so that the prophet would intercede for him or reveal to him the purposes of God¹² in the face of an imminent war with the Philistines. The Mosaic Law placed a ban on communication with the dead (Lev 19:31¹³). But such a ban indicates that many considered such communication possible. This is *prima facie* evidence that ancient Israel believed in at least some form of life after death. It is certain that both Saul and the witch, as well as those who directed Saul to Endor, believed that the souls of the dead continued to exist, and even have links with the living.

The ghostly Samuel had the appearance of a prophet, and he began his oracle to Saul by expressing annoyance at the latter's final fall into depravity, expressed by his consultation of the witch of Endor. Secondly, Samuel was displeased at having been called up from his grave (1 Sam 28:15). The dead are thought to be at peace¹⁴ and are reluctant to be disturbed. The fact that the ghostly Samuel expressed annoyance at having been called up from his

¹²P. R. Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, p.215

¹³"Do not turn mediums or wizards; do not seek them out...."

¹⁴Cf Job 3:13-15, 17-19.

rest suggests that Sheol is not a place of torment or anguish for all, at least for the righteous. The reaction of the witch to the appearance of Samuel is remarkable. She expected to see Samuel in ghostly form, but when Samuel rose from the underworld, his appearance impressed the woman as that of a god (an *ebhim*).¹⁵ This could be taken as an indication that the shadowy existence of the righteous in Sheol is not as shadowy as the ancient Israelites believed. Some early texts also provide instances of resuscitation.

2.3 Narratives of Resuscitation (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-36)

In the Old Testament there were instances of resuscitations of the dead, which involve a return to this earthly life. The First Book of Kings 17:17-24 offers us one of such instances. This passage relates Elijah's resuscitation of the dead son of the widow of Zarephath. The account says that the woman's son fell ill and became worse until his breathing ceased. From the passage it seems that the boy was given up for dead or he actually seemed to have died.¹⁶ According to the text, Elijah 'stretched himself upon the child three times' so that the vigour of his own health and vitality might be transferred to the boy. Elijah specifically prayed that the boy's soul return, not simply that his body return to life (1 Kings 17:21). "Nephesh" is here explicitly distinguished from the dead body of the widow's son, whose *nephesh* returns to quicken his remains at the prophet's intercession." The consequence of Elijah's prayer was that the boy began to breathe again. Although the story serves to indicate the genuineness of Elijah's prophetic vocation, it also expands the reader's understanding of the character of God. The story illustrates one point, that Yahweh has absolute power over life and death.¹⁷ The resuscitation narratives

¹⁵ Ackroyd, *Samuel*, p.214.

¹⁶ P. R. Ackroyd et al., *The First Book of Kings*, Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1972, p.202.

¹⁷ Ackroyd, *Kings*, pp.203-204.

of Elijah and Elisha provide some insight into the Old Testament view of afterlife.

Resuscitation, however, is different from resurrection. Resuscitated persons still die again. These stories express the belief in the existence of the soul (*nephesh*) after death apart from the body. The belief that God could restore the dead to life in this world opens the way for a belief that even those who have died could be restored to life. The power of God, then, is not limited to the land of the living; God also has power over the dead and can restore them to life. The belief provides the background for Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones in Ezek 37:1-14.

2.4 Ezek 37:1-14: Resurrection - Restorations of the People of God

Ezekiel pictures the exile and restoration of Israel in his vision of the valley of the dry bones. Ezek 37:1-14 is concerned with the restoration of the people of Yahweh after the tragic events of 587 B.C. The prophet portrays the condition of the Israelites in exile as a longstanding state of despair or death.¹⁸ To a nation bruised and quasi-moribund, the prophet foretold an impending revivification in the form of national disinterment. It is a resurrection which consists concretely in the restoration of the "house of Israel." Here Ezekiel looks forward to the renewal of the nation which consists in the revival of the bones of the dead, a revival which will be effected by God's spirit.¹⁹ God announces that he will open their graves, bring them forth from those graves, and restore them to their homeland. The expression "I will open your grave..." signal God's intervention to bring about a new life. The revival of the bones symbolizes the revivification of the nation. God demonstrates his power and sovereignty over life and

¹⁸K. W. Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1974, p.249.

¹⁹R. M. Achard, "Resurrection (OT)", in D. N. Freedman (ed), *ABD* 5, New York: Doubleday, 1992, 683 (680-684).

death by re-animating and re-clothing the bones of the dead with flesh and re-energizing them with “breath” or “spirit” (*ruah*) so that they would live.²⁰ This will be so because God is the author of life.²¹ God demonstrates his life giving power, not only by initiating life but also by restoring it.²² In vv. 5-6, Ezekiel is twice commanded to prophesy, summoning “the breath” or “the spirit” (*haruah*) to breathe into the slain that they might live. The verb “to breathe” in v. 9 is from the root *nph* (*napah*). It is the same verb used in Gen 2:7 to describe how God, having formed a human body from the soil, breathed into its nostrils the breath of life.²³ In the priestly account of creation, the spirit (*ruah*) of God is said to hover over the raw elements of the world, transforming them into a living cosmos (Gen 1:2). Here, as in Gen 2:7, *ruah* is the animating principle. It was this pervading power that gave continued life to a finite world.²⁴ This spirit of God which brings about the re-energization of the bones is a powerful creative force akin to that in Genesis 1:2.²⁵ The passage does not necessarily suggest that in Ezekiel's day, corporeal resurrection of individuals was an established idea. What the prophet proclaims is a resurrection in the sense of national restoration from exile. The first clear notion of physical resurrection appears in Daniel 12:1-3 (which post-dates the book of Ezekiel).

3. The Idea of Resurrection in the Old Testament Writings
There are some striking Old Testament passages that attest to a belief in the resurrection of the dead. Some of these passages are coloured with the hope of restoration of Israel. Two of these

²⁰K. P. Darr, *The Book of Ezekiel*, NIB 6, L. E. Keck (Ed), Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001, p.1499

²¹Cf. Job 10:1112; Ps 139:1316.

²²L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, WBC, Dallas: Word Books, 1998, CD Rom Edition.

²³Darr, *Ezekiel*, p.1500.

²⁴Ps 104:2930; Job 34:1415.

²⁵L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 1998, CD Rom Edition.

passages deserve to be mentioned with reference to the doctrine of the resurrection. These are Isa 26:19 and Dan 12:13.

Isa 26:19

Your dead shall live their corpses shall rise
O dwellers in the dust awake and sing for joy
For your dew is a radiant dew and the earth will give
birth to those long dead

This text is considered as one of the first definite predictions of resurrection in the Old Testament. It is part of a larger unit usually referred to as the "apocalypse of Isaiah" (Isa 24-27).²⁶ Isaiah apocalypse dates to the end of the Persian period. Isa 24-27 used the language of resurrection and vivification in the context of national restoration. J. Blenkinsopp, on the basis of Ezekiel 37, proposes that the idea of God's people returning from the dead, which Isa 26:19 promises, is a metaphorical way of expressing a hope of the restoration of the nation after the misfortune of Judah of 587 B.C.²⁷ This position is shared by scholars such as T. H. Gaster, O. Eissfeldt, G. Fohrer and G. F. Hasel.²⁸ However, the restoration, which Isa 26:19 envisages, includes the resurrection of Israelites who have died for the sake of their faith. God will adjudicate the specific injustice perpetrated against the righteous who have been unjustly slain by raising their bodies up.²⁹ But while the idea of individual resurrection

²⁶ Old Testament apocalyptic stresses the deliverance of God's people and the physical resurrection of the dead.

²⁷ J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, AB, 19, New York: Doubleday, 2000, p.371.

²⁸ T. H. Gaster, *Resurrection*, IDB, IV, G. A. Buttrick (ed), 1962, p.40, (39-43); G. M. Tucker, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*, L. E. Keck (ed), Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001, p.222; J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, AB, 19, New York: Doubleday, 2000, p.370; O. Eissfeldt, *Old Testament: An Introduction*, New York: Harper and Row, 1965, p. 324; G. Fohrer, *Der Aufbau der Apokalypse des Jesajabuches (Isa 24-27)*, CBQ 25 (1963), 37); G. F. Hasel, "Resurrection in the Theology of Old Testament Apocalypse", *ZAW* 92 (1980) p. 268 (267-284).

was not clearly attested before the persecution launched by Antiochus IV (Dan 12:2), a less clearly delineated conviction of survival after death was already emerging long before that time.³⁰ Isa 26:19, like Dan 12:1-3, does not merely speak of survival, nor does it rest on a belief in the immortality of some element (soul or spirit) of the human personality. It describes a divine act of resurrection of the dead, though in a limited way.³¹

Isa makes a distinction between \RXU dead who VKDOO DZ DNH and sing for joy" v and their dead who will not (v. 14). Already in Isa 25:8 the prophet announces that God would "swallow up death forever" (25:8); God demonstrates his dominion over life and death by raising the righteous from the dead (26:19). The resurrection of the righteous becomes a demonstration of the divine justice beyond the grave.³² Apparently the resurrection, which Isa 26:19 speaks about, is not a universal resurrection of all humans, but one accorded only to the "dead of Yahweh" (cf. v 19, "your dead ones"), who had died for the sake of the name of the God of Israel (the martyrs). The latter belong to Yahweh. Death is not the ultimate end of those that are Yahweh's possession. His promise is: "Their bodies shall arise" (v.19ab).³³

The verbs "to live" (hayah), "to rise" (qum) and "to awake" (qis, KISKIQ) are used here with reference to the resurrection. The designation "(the) dwellers in the dust" VKRNQH DSDU is

²⁹Hasel, "Resurrection", p.275 (267-284); G. B. Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah i-xxvii, Edingburg: T & T. Clark, 1975 (1912), p. 446.

³⁰Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, p.371.

³¹A. S. Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 1-39*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary, Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1973, p.156.

³²Cf. Job 14:13-17; E. W. Hamrick, Resurrection, Treatise on, Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible, W. E. Mills (ed), Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1990 (1994), p. 756.

³³Hasel, "Resurrection", pp. 270-271 (267-284).

employed in parallelism to the "dead". In the Old Testament, dust is the abode of the dead. Here "dust" is employed in parallelism to the "dead". So the expression, "(the) dwellers of (the) dust", refers to those who rest in the grave.³⁴ The expression "your dead" (*meteyka*) identify the dead as belonging to Yahweh. This is one of the first bold statements in the Old Testament referring to the possibility of a physical resurrection to new life.³⁵ The re-vivification of the dead by Yahweh reveals God's total control over life and death³⁶ and over history. Although Isa 26:19 offers us an outstanding indication of the belief in the corporeal resurrection of the dead in the Old Testament, Dan 12:1-3 presents us with the clearest evidence of resurrection in the Old Testament.

Dan 12:1-3

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

Dan 12:2-3 is the first undisputed evidence of a belief in the resurrection of the dead in the Old Testament.³⁷ The text has a strikingly apocalyptic character. The book was written at the time of the crisis provoked by the persecution perpetrated by

³⁴Hasel, "Resurrection", p.272 (267-284).

³⁵Hasel, "Resurrection", p.273 (267-284).

³⁶Hasel, "Resurrection", p.276 (267-284).

³⁷P. Benoit and R. Murphy (Ed), *Immortality and Resurrection*, USA: Herder and Herder, 1970, p.40.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes towards Jews who were opposed to the Hellenization of Jerusalem in 167 B.C. Many of the Jews who were faithful to the law were killed. Dan 12:1-3 can be dated around 164 B.C. The Book of Daniel is addressed to a people brutalized into despair as a result of the persecution. The seer promises a revival of the nation and an awakening of people individually. The resurrection to everlasting life in Dan 12 takes place at the turning-point of the aeons, i.e. "at that time".³⁸

The twice repeated phrase "at that time" ED HMKDKL is one of the usual eschatological phrases. The phrase in 12:1 is resumptive³⁹ and makes reference to the event related in 11:2-45 - the time of the final battle with Antiochus and all that he symbolizes. The expression points to the time of the end which forms the climax of the events leading to the HMFKDWRQ⁴⁰ It is a time of deliverance, the time of the decisive heavenly intervention⁴¹ and vindication of God's people. It is the climactic time of distress when the old aeon gives way to the new.⁴²

"Michael, the great prince, will arise". Michael has already been introduced by the author in 10:13,21. Here he is presented as the great prince (hassar), God's warrior-general, the fighting angel. His role at that decisive time is one of a judicial advocate or executor of judgment or both,⁴³ who stands in defence of God's people.⁴⁴ Michael "will arise" to defend the cause of the upright

³⁸Hasel, "Resurrection", p. 280 (267-284).; see. J. J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death*, CBQ 36 (1974) P. 34 (21-43).

³⁹J. E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC 30, Dallas: Word Books, 1998, CD Rom Edition.

⁴⁰G. W.E Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, HTS Studies, XXVI, London: Harvard Uni Press, 1972, p.11.

⁴¹J. J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia: Minneapolis, 1993, p.390.

⁴²Hasel, "Resurrecton", p. 277 (267-284).

and to see to it that those whose names are found "written in the book" will "escape" from the realm of death and from the annihilation referred to in Dan 11:44.

The reference to a book in which people's names are written is found elsewhere in the prophetic texts. In Isa 4:2-6 and Mal 3:16-18 it is a register of those who will survive God's judgment and who will live as citizens of the New Jerusalem. Ps 69:28 refers to it as the book of life (*seper hayim*). In the New Testament "the book of life" (*biblos tes zoes*), in which the names of those who are saved are inscribed, is mentioned in Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27. Those whose names are written in the book of life are the righteous who have survived the judgment of God. These, according to Dan 12: 2, are destined for eternal life.⁴⁵ They are the righteous who remained faithful to Yahweh in the hour of persecution by Antiochus.⁴⁶

Dan is very significant "Many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt" The Old Testament uses the imagery of "sleep" to describe death.⁴⁷ Those who sleep in "the dust of the earth" refer to the dead. The Hebrew phrase *adamah 'apar*, "dust of the earth", refers to the abode of the dead in the underworld. "Dust" is used in parallelism to Sheol in Job 17:16. Dust is associated with death (Job 7:21; 20:11). In Isa 26:19 the dead are called "dwellers of the dust."

⁴⁵Collins, *Daniel*, p.390.

⁴⁶J. M. Lindenberger, Daniel 12:1-4 in Context, *Int* 39 (1985) p.183 (181-186); Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, p.11; A. A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, The Anchor Bible Series vol. 23, New York: Doubleday, 1978, p.306; Dan 12:1 reflects Jude 1:9 and Rev. 12:7.; L. F. Hartman et al, *The Book of Daniel*, AB 23, New York: Doubleday, 1978, p.306.

⁴⁷Collins, *Daniel*, p.391.

⁴⁸Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, p.16.

⁴⁹cf. Jer 51:39, 57; Job 3:13; 14:12.

The text also describes the resurrection as an awakening. This passage speaks of "many" who shall awake, some to eternal life, some others to eternal reproach.⁴⁸ To awaken (qis) refers to the revivification of the dead. Dan 12:2 declares that the two groups will be raised. This is the first time in the Old Testament that we have an explicit affirmation of a resurrection⁴⁹ which includes both the righteous and the wicked. This finds support in the usage of the demonstrative pronouns "these ... those" (elleh ... weelleh) in Dan 12:2. But while one group is raised to everlasting life, the second group is resurrected to eternal disgrace and everlasting abhorrence.⁵⁰ This reflects Isa 66:24 where the righteous look at the corpses of the sinners who burn in a fire that does not quench and who are "an abhorrence to all flesh. Daniel, however, does not elaborate on the punishment of the damned, but he seems to go beyond Isaiah 66 in envisaging the resurrection of the sinner to experience disgrace.⁵¹ Although the author employs metaphorical language in this passage there is virtually unanimous agreement among modern scholars that Daniel is referring to the actual resurrection of individuals from the dead.⁵² The raising up of "many" becomes God's ultimate victory over evil.⁵³ The resurrection of the righteous unto glory is a demonstration of their vindication.

It is not clear whether the term "many" (rabbim) in Dan 12:2

⁴⁸ This passage is characterized by a polarizing attitude evident in the "us-versus-them" mentality of the author. God approves of an in-group (the pious) to which "we" belong, over against an ill-defined "them" (the impious), "reprobate enemies of God fit only for destruction.

⁴⁹ R. Hammer, *The Book of Daniel, The Cambridge Bible Commentary*, Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1976, P.116.

⁵⁰ G. A. Barton, "Resurrection" in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, X, New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co, 1905, p. 382.

⁵¹ Collins, *Daniel*, p.393.

⁵² Collins, *Daniel*, pp. 391-392.

⁵³ G. A. F. Knight, *The Book of Daniel, The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary of the Bible*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971, P. 449.

means a total number of the dead or simply a part of them.⁵⁴ While some scholars interpret *UDEELP* in an exclusive sense i.e. many of the dead others like A. A. Di Lella interpret it in an inclusive sense i.e. all the dead Jews. "Many" (*rabbim*) here may be a Semitism for "all".⁵⁵ The Hebrew preposition *min* (from) has a partitive force (expressing the idea of separation), i.e. many of those who sleep in the land of the dust will awake (12:2a). This would mean that a partial resurrection is in view.⁵⁶ The LXX, Theodotion, and Vulgate offer the same translation. In this case the term *rabbim* is used in the exclusive sense of "many" as opposed to the inclusive sense of all. It seems more plausible to assume that the author of Dan 12:2 is not particularly concerned about the lot of all the dead, but only of all the dead Jews alone. Thus the "many who will awake from the sleep of death includes "all" the Jews, both the pious and the impious. The text promises eternal life to the faithful Jews who persevered through the days of final tribulation. As for those who are already dead, sleeping as the old conception of Sheol pictured them, many will arise again.

The "some" who will awake to experience everlasting life are the loyal Jews. They are further referred to as those whose names are "written in the book" of life (12:1). Therefore, renegade Jews are the "others" who will awake unto shame and everlasting contempt (12:2). It is possible that the author is thinking of apostates who allied themselves with Antiochus Epiphanes in his attempt to establish pagan worship.⁵⁷ What this text indicates is that in the realm of the afterlife, each person will receive from God the recompense he or she deserves. Thus for the author of Dan 12:1-3, the resurrection is a means by which both the

⁵⁴Di Lella writes that the use of *pollon* here is Semitic, its meaning is not "some, but no all", but "all in contrast to one." See Di Lella, *Daniel*, p.307

⁵⁵Di Lella, *Daniel*, p.307

⁵⁶Collins, *Daniel*, p.392; L. F. Hartman et al, 1978, p.307.

⁵⁷R. Hammer, *The Book of Daniel, The Cambridge Bible Commentary*, Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1976, P.116.

righteous and the wicked dead are enabled to receive their respective vindication or condemnation.⁵⁸ Dan 12:1-3 thus affirms a resurrection which, unlike Ezek 37, was no longer merely the restoration of a nation but the individual recompense of personal merit.⁵⁹

Dan 12:3 makes reference to a particular class of loyal Jews who will receive special glory at the resurrection: "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" These are referred to as "the wise" (*maskilim*), who bring many to righteousness. The substantive *P DNIQ* was a title for a teacher. For G. W. E Nickelsburg and Di Lella, the *P DNIQ* are the teachers of the Hasidic community who by their teaching and upright example "lead many to righteousness"⁶⁰ Carl Armerding is inclined to identifying "the wise" of Dan as those who tremble at the word of the Lord who on account of their teaching have been despised and cast off for Yahweh's sake Isa Matt

⁶¹ Some of them might have lost their lives on account of their activism. The *maskilim* are singled out for special honour: not only will they arise, they shall also "shine like the stars forever and ever"

In Dan 12:3, the *maskilim* are portrayed as the true heroes of the persecution. They are portrayed as activists, but they are not said to fight. Their activism lies in the knowledge they impart, which provides a perspective that enables the faithful Jews to bear up under persecution and even lay down their lives, confident that they will be raised up and rewarded with a special glory at the

⁵⁸ Di Lella, *Daniel*, pp.307-308.

⁵⁹ S. B. Marrow, *Resurrection of the Dead*, NCE 12, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967, p.422.

⁶⁰ Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, p.24; Di Lella, *Daniel*, p.309.

⁶¹ C. Armerding, "Asleep in the Dust," *B.Sac* 21 (1964) p. 158 (153-158).

resurrection.⁶² These are distinguished from the rest of the faithful because "they will shine as the stars forever and ever."⁶³ This idea is taken up in Matt 13:43: "The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The stars have been identified with the angelic host in Israelite tradition.⁶⁴

In Enoch 10:4 the righteous are promised that portals of heaven" will be opened to them and that they "will shine as the lights of heaven." In Mark 12: 25 (and parallels) Jesus tells the Sadducees that when men rise from the dead they are like angels in heaven.⁶⁵ God rewards the *maskilim* by ensuring that they "shine as bright as the stars to all eternity." Dan 12:1-3 does not exclude the continuation of life on earth. The author seems to say that the earthly fulfilment is not the goal of the *maskilim*. Their recompense is the higher world to which the affairs of this world are directed. Their fellowship with the angels becomes the reward for a life of wisdom and purity. Apart from these passages that make undisputed reference to the resurrection of the body in the Old Testament, there are some other Old Testament passages that make references to the resurrection. These include 2 Macc 7; 12:38-45 and Wisd 3:1-10.

2 Macc 7; 12:38-45; Wisd 3:1-10

The Second Book of the Maccabees gives two main indications to the belief in the resurrection of the dead. 2 Macc 7 gives a very moving account of the martyrdom of seven brothers, whose

⁶² J. J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, New York: Crossroad, 1984, p. 89.

⁶³ In Daniel too, the identification of stars and angels is implied. Cf. A. A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, AB 23, New York: Doubleday, 1978, p.309.

⁶⁴ J. J. Collins, "The Son of Man and the Saints of the Most High in the Book of Daniel," *JBL* 93/1 (1974), p.57 (50-66); W. Foerster, "Aster," *TDNT* 1, G. Kittel (Ed), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964, pp.503-505.

⁶⁵ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, p.90.

names are unknown but who are popularly called "the Maccabees" (2 Mac 7). Their faith in the resurrection, which they explicitly assert (v. 11), gives them the courage to undergo terrible sufferings and death than disobey the Law of God. What gave them motivation is their faith that even if they lose their lives on account of the faithfulness to God's law, God will raise them up to live again forever (2 Macc 7:9, 23).

2 Macc 12:43-46 lays stress on the intercession of the saints and the value of prayers for the dead. This is the basis of the dogma of the communion of saints. Vv.43f is usually cited as a background to the practice of praying for the dead. In this text Judas expresses faith in the resurrection and salvation of his fallen soldiers. For this reason, he asks that expiatory sacrifices and prayers be offered for the dead by the living, in order to help them atone for their sins in the next life. This book also suggests that there is such a thing as atonement beyond the grave by asserting the existence of a state of purgation (12:38ff), an interim stage where souls are purified. The author expresses the belief that the dead who are still tainted by sin can be helped by suffrages offered by the living. Alongside 2 Maccabees is the Book of Wisdom, which speaks of the purificatory value of the earthly sufferings of the just and their sure hope for a happy future with God.

The book of Wisdom was written in Greek, probably at Alexandria a little before the Christian era. The book is very explicit on the existence of a future life where the just will find happiness with God. The author states that the death of the righteous is only an illusion (Wisd 3:2-4). In reality they are in the hand of God (v.1), they are in peace (v.3) and share in everlasting felicity.⁶⁶ The 'hand of God' traditionally signifies divine power

and protection (cf. Ps 95:4). To be in peace intimates the fullness of rest and well-being (Pss 4:8; 29:11). The hope of immortality is based on the author's conviction that justice is immortal (Wisd 1:15).⁶⁷

The author declares that the suffering of the righteous is only temporal; in fact it is purificatory; it is a kind of transformation which prepares them for union with God. The author declares that at the time of judgment the righteous will "shine forth" like "sparks through the stubble"; they will "govern nations and rule over peoples" (vv. 7-8). In apocalyptic writings the idea of the righteous shining with brilliance signifies their vindication at the time of judgment. This refers back to Dan 12:3 where the wise and the righteous are described as shining forth like the brightness of the sky and the stars (cf. Matt 13:43).⁶⁸ Uppermost in the thought of the author is that death is not a destroyer of ultimate human value. The righteous will abide with God in love.

4. Conclusion

Although these Old Testament passages may have had late developments, taken as a whole, they point to a certain Old Testament belief in a life beyond death. The belief that God will raise back to life those who have died for their fidelity to God's law is hinged on God's creative power. The God, who calls into existence what was not, also has the power to call back to life those who have died for their for the sake of his name. Both Isa 26 and Dan 12 share the hope that God will demonstrate his sovereignty over death by granting new life to the faithful. The belief in afterlife is premised on the belief that the human being is

⁶⁷R. C. Dentan, *The Wisdom of Solomon, The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, C. M. Laymon (Ed), Nashville: Abingdon, 1971, p.546.

⁶⁸M. Kolarcik, *The Book of Wisdom*, NIB 5, CD Rom Edition.

⁶⁹M. Kolarcik, *The Book of Wisdom*, NIB 5, CD Rom Edition.

more than his or her body; that the essence of life survives beyond death. The belief is above all predicated on belief in God and his promises. Since God is the God of the living (Exod 3:14), he will certainly not allow death to have the final word. Life will ultimately triumph over death.

While Isa 26 speaks only of the resurrection of the righteous, Dan 12:2b speaks of a twofold resurrection: "some to eternal life and some to eternal contempt". In Isaiah the resurrection of the righteous means the vindication of the righteous. In Daniel the resurrection is the means by which both the righteous and the wicked receive their respective vindication and condemnation. Daniel goes beyond Isaiah in saying that there will be punishment for the wicked who are already dead. Daniel's concept of the resurrection is judicial. God will not only judge those who live but also those who are dead. The resurrection of the faithful people of God demonstrates not only the vindication of the just but also demonstrates the Lordship of God over life and death. The Lordship of God involves the overcoming of the limitations of human existence. God will demonstrate his sovereignty over all forces by granting new life to the faithful.