

Resurrection

The Origin and Future
of a Biblical Doctrine

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Faith and Scholarship Colloquies



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Where Does the Concept of Resurrection Appear and How Do We Know That?

James H. Charlesworth

Scholars have disagreed on the places where the concept of resurrection appears in the Old Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Jewish apocryphal literature. It is important, at the beginning of this book, to clarify the various meanings of “resurrection” in biblical and parabiblical literature. The biblical and apocryphal documents contain passages that are often ambiguous. How do we know that a passage contains the belief in the resurrection?¹

How should we proceed to answer this question? We should not look for the concept of resurrection by isolating a word or a number of words, thinking that ideas can be conveyed by one word in isolation.² Such a concept does not reside in one word, as some scholars have assumed. Instead, we can detect the concept of resurrection only by exegetically examining a cluster of words in a particular context. It is startling to observe that few of the experts in Second

Temple Judaism who claim the Jewish documents contain a belief in the resurrection have presented a detailed exegesis of each passage purported to contain such a belief. This point leads us to clarify what concept is represented by the noun “resurrection.”

Resurrection denotes the concept of God’s raising the body and soul after death (meant literally) to a new and eternal life (not a return to mortal existence). This belief should not be confused with the Hellenistic concept of the immortality of the soul, which seems to be espoused in the Wisdom of Solomon (3:1–4:16). The concept of immortality is also what Josephus mistakenly thought the Essenes believed (*War* 2.154–158), perhaps because he was modifying their concept so that Romans could comprehend it.³

As we seek to discern the intention of a text, it is also good to contemplate the following main questions: (1) Is the text presenting us with an allegory or thinking allegorically?⁴ (2) Are words like “dead” to be taken literally, or are they metaphors for physically or spiritually “weak” people?⁵

A preliminary attempt at a classification of the many dimensions of resurrection, and naming of the various categories of “resurrection,” should include at least the following categories.⁶

Categories of “Resurrection”

1. Resurrection of the Nation

The raising of the nation Israel from disgrace or defeat has too often been confused as “resurrection” of mortals who have died. The locus classicus for the concept of the resurrection of the nation is found in Ezekiel’s description of the dry bones. Recall these words from Ezek 37:

The hand of the Lord came upon me. He took me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the valley. It was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many

of them spread over the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "O mortal, can these bones live again?" I replied, "O Lord God, only You know." And He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus said the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live again. . . ." And He said to me, "O mortal, these bones are the whole House of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, our hope is gone; we are doomed.' Prophecy, therefore, and say to them: Thus said the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and lift you out of the graves, O My people, and bring you to the land of Israel."

(Ezek 37:1–12; JPS *Tanakh*)

For centuries, this passage was, and in many synagogues and churches today is, misinterpreted as referring to the resurrection of individuals to eternal life. Biblical scholars once concurred in assuming that this chapter presented evidence of a belief in the resurrection of the individual after death. Now, most scholars are convinced that the reference is to the rising of the nation Israel — "the whole House of Israel" — from its defeated status in world history. The same concept appears in Isa 26:19 and elsewhere (probably in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *T. Jud.* 25:3–5; cf. also *T. Mos.* 10:7–10).

Some later readers of Ezek 37 interpreted the stunning imagery to refer to the resurrection of individuals after their deaths. This possible exegesis is proved by the discovery of a scroll found in Qumran Cave 4. Many centuries after the composition of Ezek 37, when more attention became focused on the individual as opposed to the nation, Jews interpreted this biblical text differently than the author had intended. The author of *Pseudo-Ezekiel* (4Q385 frg. 2) perceives "the bones" as belonging to "a large crowd of men" who "will rise and bless the Lord of Hosts who causes them to live."

2. Raising of a Group from Disenfranchisement

The Jews who lived at Qumran, on the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea, had been banished from the Temple (even though they claim to have left; cf. 4QMMT = 4Q394–399);

hence, some of the passages in the *Thanksgiving Hymns* (or *Hodayot* = 1QH) allude to this disenfranchisement and establishment at Qumran, to prepare the way of the Lord (interpreting Isa 40:3). It is possible that the Qumranites, or some of them, envisioned the day when they would be resurrected from this disenfranchisement and would again be in charge of the temple cult. Sometimes at Qumran it is evident that the *Yahad* (the Community) will arise out of its disenfranchisement because it is the “eternal planting.” In particular, see this section of the *Thanksgiving Hymns*:

You [have plant]ed a planting of cyprus, and elm,
with cedar together for your glory;
(these are) the trees of life hidden
among all the trees of the water
beside the mysterious water source.
And they caused to sprout the shoot [*nēšer*]
for the eternal planting.

(1QH^a 16.5–6)

The Qumranites are depicted, metaphorically, as “the trees of life” that are indeed God’s “eternal planting.”⁷ Thus, they will rise up out of their present place of preparation in the wilderness.

3. Raising of the Individual from Social Disenfranchisement

Several passages in the *Thanksgiving Hymns* spring to mind to illustrate this category. An example is the autobiographical poem by the Righteous Teacher in 1QH^a 16 (= olim 8), just cited. In this hymn the Righteous Teacher refers to himself as “the irrigator of the garden” and as the one “who causes to sprout the hol[y] shoot for the planting of truth.”⁸ He is “concealed” and without esteem, yet he praises the Lord for placing him in the desert “as an overflowing fountain,” and as “a spring of water in a land of dryness.”

The Righteous Teacher had been one of the leading priests in Jerusalem; he may have served as the high priest. He

was disenfranchised, but God chose him to prepare the eternal planting, and he will be vindicated (and perhaps some lines indicate reenfranchised in the Temple).⁹ The Righteous Teacher appears to refer not to resurrection from the dead; he seems to imagine his disciples rising up out of disenfranchisement.

4. Raising of the Individual from Personal Embarrassment

This category is found in 1QH^a 10 (= olim 2). The author is most likely the Righteous Teacher because of the claim that he is the one “to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets” (1QpHab 7.4–5).¹⁰ He states that he has been embarrassed, but God has removed him from such disgrace. Here are the major lines:

And you made me an object of shame and derision for traitors. . . .
But (then) you made me a banner for the elect of righteousness,
And the interpreter of knowledge concerning marvelous mysteries,
to test [the men of] truth
and to try those who love instruction.

(1QH^a 10 [= olim 2].9–14)

The author celebrates how he has been elevated (resurrected) from an object of shame to the interpreter of knowledge. Though he adds subsequently that his enemies cast him down toward the pit, he has not died. He has been appointed — and in that sense elevated to — the incomparable interpreter by God. This category does not demand public or social “resurrection” to a place of honor.

5. Raising of the Individual from the Sickbed to Health

According to Mark 5:21–43 Jesus heals or “resurrects” from the dead Jairus’s little daughter. The girl is clearly sick (5:23), and later the boisterous throng is convinced she is dead (5:40). Jesus announces she is not dead but “sleeping” (5:39).

Hence, according to this text, Jesus raises from near death someone who had been ill. Jesus commands her, “‘*Talitha koum,*’ which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise [*egeire*]’ ” (5:41). This category covers texts that contain the concept of one who is sick but is said to rise up from the sickbed (real or metaphorical). The implied author is not referring to one who is raised from the dead.

In the *Thanksgiving Hymns* are numerous expressions of similar meaning. Here, for example, is 1QH^a 17 (= olim 9).4–12:

The breaking-waves of death [engulfed me],
 And on the couch of my bed Sheol uttered a mourning. . . .
 But . . . you have not rejected me. . . .
 In the face of the blows you have made my spirit stand up
 (or arise).

In Ps 132:3 “the couch of my bed” denotes the sickbed, and it is apparent that the poet who composed the lines just quoted from the *Thanksgiving Hymns* knew this psalm and employed the selfsame phrase with a similar meaning.

6. Raising of the Individual from Inactivity to Do God’s Will

In *Qumran Studies*, Rabin argued that 1QH^a 14 (= olim 6).29–30 “definitely” spoke “about the rising of the dead.”¹¹ More recently Puech, in a detailed and insightful study, claimed that this very passage is difficult to understand, especially because of the lacunae, which prohibit a study of the passage in a meaningful context.¹²

The passage probably does not portray a resurrection of the righteous from the dead. Here is my translation of the passage:

And at the time of judgment God’s sword shall hasten,
 And all his sons of tr[ut]h shall be awakened to [destroy]
 the sons of ungodliness.
 And all the sons of transgression shall be no more.

(1QH^a 14 [= olim 6].29–30)

In the following lines of the hymn is a reference to those “who lie in the dust” (14.34) — but surely, as L. R. Bailey points out, “dust” in Biblical Hebrew is often a euphemism for humility (cf. 1 Sam 2:8; Ps 44:25).¹³ The passage in the *Thanksgiving Hymns* seems to predict the raising up of the righteous ones, probably the Holy Ones of the Community who are aligned with the Holy Ones in heaven (cf. the *Angelic Liturgy*), at the time of judgment, the end of time. The Qumranites have entered into the Community of the end time and are preparing for the final eschatological battle. As the *War Scroll* clarifies, this time is not postmortem. It inaugurates the final days and the judgment, after which comes the time of bliss, when there is no more evil and Belial (Satan) is defeated.

7. Raising of the Individual from Despondency Due to Consciousness of Sin

The following passage seems to be an example of this category:

Near death was I for my sins,
And my iniquities had sold me to Sheol:
But you delivered me, O Lord.
According to your great compassions,
And according to your many righteous (deeds).
(11QPsa 19.10–11)

The individual confesses he is near death due to his “sins.” Using metaphorical language often employed in texts that depict life after death, the author is despondent on earth but praises the Lord for being delivered from death and out of Sheol. The author is probably not then referring to a post-mortem resurrection. He is using metaphors to express his appreciation to the Lord for delivering him from going to Sheol because of his sins.

8. Raising of the Individual from Ignorance to Divinely Revealed Knowledge

In the *Thanksgiving Hymns* 19 is another passage that has been interpreted to refer to the resurrection of the dead. Rabin was convinced it was one of the passages that “definitely speak of the rising of the dead.”¹⁴ Here is the passage:

that (you, O God) may raise up (*lēhārīm*) the worms of the dead
from the dust to the secret [of your understanding],
and from a perverse spirit to [your] discernment;
and that he may be stationed before you, . . .
that he may be renewed with all that will be,
and with those who know in a joyful Community.

(1QH^a 19 [= olim 11].12–14)

The poet has composed these lines according to *parallelismus membrorum*, which is synonymous. Thus “dust” is a euphemism for “perverse spirit,” and the Qumranite is praising God for having been raised not to eternal life but to *divine knowledge*.¹⁵

9. Raising of the Individual from Meaninglessness in This World to a Realizing Eschatology (= Experiencing the End Time in the Present)

At Qumran, angels were present among humans during worship services, the future was breaking into the present, and heaven was not far off, but touching earth in the Community. When one became a full member of the Community, he moved into a new world full of meaning. He entered into an eternal Community. Thus, the dualism so explicit in the *Rule of the Community* (3.13–4.26) was breaking down, and “eternal life” was experienced in the present.¹⁶ Thus, what was scripturally and traditionally preserved for resurrected Jews in a postmortem existence was now transferred to the Qumranites within the Community (the *Yahad*). Two examples of this category are 1QH^a 11 (= olim 3).20 and the *Rule of Blessings* (1QS^b) 5.23. In the *Thanksgiving Hymns* we find a praise to God for being raised up in life:

I thank you, O God, for you have redeemed my soul from
the pit;
And from the Sheol of Abaddon.
You have raised me up to an eternal height,
So that I may walk about in uprightness without limit.
And I know that there is hope for the one whom you have
fashioned
from dust for the eternal council.

(1QH^a 11 [= olim 3].19–21)¹⁷

After a careful study of the poetic form of this passage, it becomes clear that a doctrine of resurrection from the dead is not present.¹⁸

The issue in interpretation pertains to the meaning of “from the pit” and “from the Sheol of Abaddon.” Do these prepositional phrases function as metaphors, or do they refer to the resurrection from the pit or Sheol of one who has died? We can be certain that the passage is not a metaphor only if there is a clear reference to death or to postmortem existence. There is none. Hence, I am convinced that 1QH^a 11 (olim 3) does not present the idea of a resurrection from the dead, and that the author had no reason to need such a view, since he was living in the *Yahad*, in which “the eternal council” is an aspect of the Qumran organization of this Community. The Qumranite was thus already participating as one of the Holy Ones in the fruits of the end time (which were traditionally reserved for the postmortem righteous ones).

10. Both-And: The Author May Intentionally Collapse Any Distinction between the Present Age and the Future Age

This category is especially evident within two communities: the Qumran Community and the Johannine Community. This meaning may be found in the *Rule of the Community* (1QS 4.6–8). The “Sons of Truth” will receive (when is not specified) “healing and great peace in a long life, multiplication of progeny together with all everlasting blessings” (presumably in the present life), as well as “endless joy in everlasting

life [or 'perpetual life'], and a crown of glory together with a resplendent attire in eternal light" (in the present and the future, but not necessarily after death).

11. Raising of Christ from Sheol (*descensus ad inferos*)

Obviously, the belief that Christ descended and then ascended from Sheol should not be confused with a belief in the resurrection from the dead. A belief in the *descensus ad inferos* seems to be found in the *Odes of Solomon*:

Sheol saw me and was shattered,
And Death ejected me and many with me.
(Ode 42:11)

As I understand this passage, the Odist constructed his poetry *ex ore Christi* so that the words are Christ's. The Odist then is referring to Christ's descent into and *ascent* out of Hades (*descensus ad inferos*). The speaker is Christ, who did not die ("I did not perish," 42:10). He is the one who frees those captured in Sheol ("And I made a congregation of living among his dead," 42:14). Hence, the Ode does not refer to postmortem resurrection; it is a resurrection out of Hades by the living Christ.

12. Raising an Apocalypticist into Heaven

It should now be abundantly clear that the expression "the raising up of the righteous ones" may not represent a belief in resurrection from the dead. The expression and concept is frequently used in antiquity to articulate the raising of an apocalypticist from earth into one of the heavens.

Sometimes this "raising up" is in a dream, and sometimes the expression denotes the physical ascent of an individual. According to the author of *1 En.* 14, Enoch states in first-person discourse that "they were calling me in a vision" (14:8). According to the author of *2 Enoch*, in contrast, Enoch awakes from his sleep and is taken by two huge men who

had stood by his bed. The men inform Enoch that he “will ascend with us to heaven today” (2 *En.* 1:8). Paul, as is well known, could not discern whether his ascent into the third heaven and into Paradise (cf. 2 *En.* 8) was in the body or out of the body, as in a dream (2 Cor 12:1–3).

A well-known passage of raising up into the heavens is found in Rev 4:1. The Seer John sees “in heaven an open door.” He is told, “Come up hither.” He then ascends into heaven and sees God’s throne room. Such references to raising up should not be confused with the raising of one who has died, to eternal life.

13. A Spiritual Rising Up or Awakening of an Individual

The concept of “resurrection” was applied in antiquity to one who was asleep, as if dead, and arose spiritually. The classic example of this category is found in Ephesians, as in this exhortation:

Arise [*egeire*], O sleeper, and rise up [*anasta*]
from those who are dead,
And Christ shall give you light. (Eph 5:14)

Such enlightened, “resurrected,” persons then live an upright life in which they are “imitators of God” (5:1). The awakened person becomes one of the “children of light” (5:8) and disassociates from the “sons of disobedience” (5:7): “those who are dead.”

14. Raising of the Individual from Death to Mortal Life

We now come to examples of the concept of resurrection from apparent postmortem existence to life again on earth. Numerous examples of this category are found in the Bible. Resurrection stories are associated with both Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:31–37; 13:20–21). The person raised from the dead returns to the earth, presumably to die again. These passages are not only “resurrection stories”;

they are also accounts of healing miracles, probably circulated to substantiate the belief that Yahweh, and not Baal, controls human destiny. There is no defeat of death in these pericopes.¹⁹

According to the evangelists, Jesus raised people from the dead. The most detailed and stunning example is the raising of Lazarus after several days (John 11). These individuals were not raised to eternal life. Resurrection from the dead (or perhaps a catatonic trance) to mortal life should not be confused with the following category, resurrection from the dead to immortality.

15. Raising of the Individual from Death to Eternal Life

We finally come to the concept that is the classic resurrection belief. In its full form, the implied author presents the belief in the resurrection of the person, in the body (though maybe in a spiritual body, but nevertheless in a body), at some future day (perhaps the age to come), with some continuity between the person who lived, died, and was raised again by God (perhaps through some mediator, like the Messiah), to everlasting life. Sometimes this resurrection is to life again *on the earth* (as in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*) or perhaps in one of the heavens, as an angel (which is a conceivable interpretation of Dan 12:2); usually, the Jew and “Christian” did not specify the place (cf. *History of the Rechabites*).

The only undisputed passage in the Old Testament of category 15 (though not in the “full form”) is found in Daniel, a document that reached its present form sometime before 164 BCE. Here is the key verse: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake [*yāqîṣû*], some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (12:2 NRSV).²⁰ This verse presents what is necessary for an undisputed reference to resurrection from the dead: a clarification that those to be raised are literally dead (“those who sleep in the dust of the earth”), a mention of resurrection (“they shall awake”),

and a resurrection of these people not to mortality but to “everlasting life.”

Dan 12:2–3 may denote a resurrection of the righteous into heaven. Those who are raised to “eternal life” are the *Maškilîm* (the wise), who will be radiant “like the bright expanse of the sky.” These seem to be identical to “those who lead the many to righteousness” who “will be like the stars forever.” Does each “like” specify “where” or “how” those raised will have postmortem eternal life? The author of Daniel seems to indicate the “how,” but some of his later readers may have thought about an existence in the heavens, since in some apocalypses the stars are angels (cf. esp. *1 En.* 90:21; cf. 18:15: “And the stars . . . are the ones which have transgressed the commandments of God”).

The earliest evidence of this category in Early Judaism is found in *1 En.* 22–27, which antedates 200 BCE.²¹ Note especially that according to *1 En.* 22:13–14 the “souls” of the unrighteous “on the day of judgment . . . will not rise from there” (*OTP* 1.25). The author of the *Epistle of Enoch* (= *1 En.* 92–105), which dates from the early decades of the second century BCE, seems to portray the wicked and righteous at a future time of judgment, perhaps after a (or the) resurrection. The text seems to imply the eschatological rewards of the righteous; for example, in the future judgment day “all the righteous,” which seems to include those who are dead, “shall rejoice” (104:13).²²

The concept of a postmortem resurrection of the body is abundantly evident in the books of the Maccabees. According to the author of *2 Macc* 14, Razis tore out his entrails, hurled them at his tormentors, Nicanor’s soldiers, and called on the Lord of life and spirit to give them again back to him (14:46). The *Testament of Judah* promises that “after these things,²³ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will arise to life” (25.1). Not only the patriarchs but also *some* of the righteous shall arise: “And those who died in grief shall arise in joy . . . And those who died on account of the Lord shall be aroused to life” (25:4).²⁴

Thanks to the recent publication of fragments of scrolls available since the 1950s, it is now clear that a hope and belief in an afterlife and postmortem resurrection is explicit in some scrolls found in the Qumran caves. The claim that no passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls refers to the belief in a resurrection after death is now disproved by the publication of some fragments that clearly refer to this belief.

Resurrection beliefs should be expected at Qumran since the Qumranites knew Daniel and the books of *Enoch*; and these documents clearly contain the belief in a resurrection of the individual after death. Thus, disproved is the claim that the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls — those scrolls composed or significantly edited at Qumran — cannot be Essene documents because they do not preserve the belief in such a resurrection.²⁵

A scroll called *On Resurrection* was found in Qumran Cave 4 (4Q521). This text is so important for our study of resurrection beliefs in early Judaism that it is imperative for readers to have handy a translation of lines 1–12:²⁶

- 1 [For the hea]vens and the earth shall obey his Messiah
- 2 [th]at (is) in them. He will not turn back from the commandments of the Holy Ones.
- 3 Persist, (all)²⁷ you who seek the Lord, in his service.
- 4 Will you not find the Lord in this, all who wait (for him with hope) in their hearts?
- 5 Surely the Lord shall seek the pious ones, and shall call the righteous ones by name.
- 6 And over the Poor Ones his spirit will hover. And (to) those believing in his might he will renew (their strength).
- 7 [...] he will glorify the pious ones with the crown of the eternal kingdom.
- 8 He shall liberate the captives, open the eyes of the blind ones, (and) straighten those be[nt over].
- 9 And for[ev]er I will hold fast . . .
- 10 . . . The Holy One will not linger [to come].

- 11 And the glorious things which are not the work of the Lord,
when he shall [come].
- 12 [For] he shall heal the slain ones, and bring life (*yēḥayeh*) (to)
the dead ones (*ūmētīm*), (and) bear joyful news (to) the
Poor Ones.

This is an obvious reference to the resurrection of the dead. What is clear in *On Resurrection* is the presence of a belief in the resurrection of the dead; what has been disputed is the means and actor. It seems clear, though, that God, either directly or through his Messiah, will raise up, “bring life,” to those who are dead.

According to rabbinic traditions, the early rabbis taught belief in the resurrection of the dead. In the *Amidah* (*Eighteen Benedictions*), the first benediction celebrates the awesomeness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; then comes the second benediction. Twice in this second benediction, following with repetition the affirmation of God’s power, the congregation in the synagogue liturgically utters the shared belief that God, because he is mighty, will raise up the dead:

Mighty Thou art — humbling the haughty,
Powerful — calling to judgment the arrogant,
Eternal — preserving the dead;
Causing the wind to blow and the dew to fall,
Sustaining the living, resurrecting the dead (*mēḥayeh hamētīm*),
O, cause our salvation to sprout in the twinkling of an eye!
Blessed art thou, O Lord, who resurrects the dead (*mēḥayeh
hamētīm*).²⁸

This liturgical formula most likely antedates 70 CE, since the *Amidah* in basic content, order, and number, though not in wording, was set before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.²⁹ Most likely, in synagogues and the temple, Pharisees and other Jews chanted the second benediction, perhaps in a form similar to the old Palestinian rite quoted above. It is also likely that Paul was familiar with a similar form of the *Amidah*.

According to the compilers of the Mishnah, anyone who claims there is no resurrection of the dead, like the one who denies the Torah is from heaven, is to be counted among

those who have no place in the age to come. The Hebrew for “resurrection from the dead” is *tēḥîyat hamētîm* (*m. Sanh.* 10). According to Rabbi Phineas ben Jair, saintliness leads to the reception of the Holy Spirit, and then “to the resurrection of the dead” ([bis] *tēḥîyat hamētîm*), which shall come “through Elijah” (*m. Soṭah* 15). In the three instances of “resurrection of the dead” in the Mishnah, the verbal root chosen is the same as that in the *Amidah*: *ḥyh* (or *ḥyy*), “live.”

The passages in the Mishnah are too late (post-second century CE) to be quoted as examples of Jewish beliefs prior to 70 CE. In addition, *Sanhedrin* is polemical — directed against those who deny the belief in the resurrection of the dead. Mishnah *Sanhedrin*, therefore, cannot be quoted as typical of pre-70 Jewish belief. It is conceivable, nevertheless, that the tradition in Mishnah *Sanhedrin* defined the belief of some pre-70 Pharisees who believed in the resurrection of the dead and rejected the Sadducees, who allegedly denied this belief (cf. Acts 23:8).

Category 15 frequently defines the New Testament documents. For example, we find the belief attributed to Peter at Pentecost:

“Men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth . . . delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God . . . God raised him up [*anestēsen*], having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” (Acts 2:22–24 RSV)

Obviously, Paul’s theology should be mentioned under category 15. Paul stressed that the resurrection of Jesus Christ guaranteed that those who believed in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God would also be raised (cf. esp. 1 Cor 15). One of the most memorable and earliest passages of this belief in Paul’s letters is 1 Thess 4:15–17:

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in

Christ shall rise [*anastēsontai*] first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.

This passage introduces us to another possible category: resurrection to immortal life from life on earth, without any need for any death. It is clear that when Paul wrote these words, he assumed he would still be alive when the risen Christ returned to earth.

16. Intentional Ambiguity

This category denotes passages in which the author seems to tend toward intentional ambiguity. The implied author obviously does not know what will occur in the future in this life and after death. The author then seems to have intentionally couched his belief in considerable ambiguity.

This final category is required by early Jewish theology. For example, only God knows what will happen in the future, and only God knows and will announce who is the Messiah. The sixteenth category also helps us grasp the reason for such disparity in exegetical opinions. The examples are abundant and may even apply to some of the passages previously interpreted otherwise. It is unwise to portray texts that are ambiguous as if they are clear.

Summary

Some of the sixteen categories overlap. Yet, while double entendre was an aspect of poetry in antiquity, especially in Semitics, some of the above categories are mutually exclusive.

Caveats and Conclusion

Sometimes it is impossible to be certain which of these categories was intended by a text. Thus, it is imperative to

perceive the wide range of meanings of “a resurrection” an author may have meant to communicate to his readers — especially a Jewish author prior to Bar Kokhba in the early second century CE (including especially the Jewish authors of Daniel and 1 Corinthians). Previous research on the concept of “resurrection” and an exegesis of the passages mentioned previously, and others, were not sufficiently nuanced by a perception of the sixteen categories that we have seen should be considered for discussion. In past discussions of resurrection in Early Judaism and in Christian origins, the full range of options was seldom considered, and one biased opinion was often forced on complex passages.

The varieties and differing taxonomies of resurrection beliefs represent not a system but an expression of the common human hope that God has the last word, and the future of the righteous will be blessed. One articulation of this hope is the differing beliefs that death is not the end, that the faithful will enjoy a resurrection by God into an eternal and blessed existence.

What an implied author meant to communicate to a particular person or group did not restrict what a reader might interpret a passage to denote. For example, Psalm 30 may not originally have included resurrection belief, but after the middle of the second century BCE and the use of Daniel and *1 Enoch*, some Jews clearly would have seen resurrection belief in the following verses:

I extol You, O Lord,
 For You have lifted me up [דָּלִיתִי],
 And not let my enemies rejoice over me.
 O Lord, my God,
 I cried out to You,
 And You healed me.
 O Lord, You brought me up from Sheol,
 Preserved me from going down into the Pit.
 (Ps 30:2–4 *Tanakh*)

O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
 and you have healed me.

O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol,
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.
(Ps 30:2–3 NRSV)

Thus, while an Israelite composed a psalm to thank God most likely for healing from a grave illness, a Jew, centuries later, might have understood the metaphorical words literally. The praise then would reflect a belief in resurrection from Sheol to a postmortem existence, not on earth as experienced now, but in the age to come. We cannot ever be certain, since there is no pesher on Psalm 30, and we have no way to interview Jews chanting Psalm 30 in the Temple.

Notes

1. The present chapter is a popular and abbreviated version of “Prolegomenous Reflections Towards a Taxonomy of Resurrection Texts,” in *The Changing Face of Judaism, Christianity, and Other Grec-Roman Religions in Antiquity* (ed. I. Henderson and G. Oegema; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus GmbH, 2006). See also the studies in P. Benoit and R. Murphy, eds., *Immortality and Resurrection* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970). Also, see J. H. Charlesworth, “Résurrection individuelle et immortalité de l’âme,” in *Histoire du Christianisme: Des origines à nos jours* (ed. J.-M. Mayeur et al.; Paris: Desclée, 2001), 14:505–51.

2. One word almost never appears in isolation in oral speech. It is usually accompanied by a context: inflexion and bodily gesture as well as mood, all of which are accompanied by setting, time, and previous and following words or actions. In short, ostensibly isolated words enter our lives and have meaning because of our history (previous, contextual, and anticipated sounds and actions).

3. See the recent and insightful discussion by N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 175–81. Also see Elledge’s contribution to the present volume (ch. 2).

4. Vermes rightly suggests that 1QH^a 6.34–35 (= now col. 14) and 11.10–14 (now col. 19) “may connote bodily resurrection,” but they also “may just be allegorical.” *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (4th ed; New York: Penguin, 1988), 88–89.

5. Ringgren thinks that the dead in 1QH^a 19 (= olim 11).12 denote “weak insignificant men.” *The Faith of Qumran: Theology of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; New York: Crossroad, 1995), 148.

6. For a succinct discussion of resurrection beliefs in the Bible and some early Jewish texts, see the two consecutive articles by R. T. Prendergast (trans. R. Martin-Achard) and Nickelsburg, "Resurrection," *ABD* 5:680–91.

7. See J. H. Charlesworth, "An Allegorical and Autobiographical Poem by the *Moreh haš-Šedeq* (1QH 8:4–11), in "Sha'arei Talmon": *Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (ed. M. Fishbane, E. Tov, with W. W. Fields; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 295–307.

8. See esp. G. Jeremias, *Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit* (SUNT 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 249–64.

9. See Charlesworth, "An Allegorical and Autobiographical Poem," 295–307.

10. For the Hebrew and translation of the pesharim, see M. P. Horgan in *Pesharim, Other Commentaries, and Related Documents* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; PTSDSSP 6B; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002). Also, see A. Dupont-Sommer, *Les écrits esséniens découverts près de la mer Morte* (8th ed.; Paris: Payot, 1980), 221n1; and G. Jeremias, *Der Lehrer Gerechtigkeit*, 192–201.

11. C. Rabin, *Qumran Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 73.

12. This comment seems odd. Lines 29 and following of this column in 1QH^a are in a section of the *Hymns* that is better preserved than most. I have benefited from the photographs in the Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Laboratory.

13. L. R. Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 85.

14. Rabin, *Qumran Studies*, 73.

15. Nickelsburg rightly states that, according to 1QH^a 20 (= olim 12) "man is raised not to eternal life as such, but to divine knowledge." *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (HTS 26; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 155.

16. H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung und gegenwärtiges Heil: Untersuchungen zu den Gemeindeliedern von Qumran mit einem Anhang über Eschatologie und Gegenwart in der Verkündigung Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966).

17. Translation mine.

18. B. P. Kittel, *The Hymns of Qumran: Translation and Commentary* (SBLDS 50; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1975), 80.

19. See the insights of Prendergast in *ABD* 5:681.

20. See the judicious insights of Prendergast in *ABD* 5:682–83.

21. See the comments by Nickelsburg in *ABD* 5:685.

22. M. A. Knibb thinks that the Aramaic of Qumran's "שמחון[appears to belong here" in the text; see Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 2:243, first note.

23. For the Greek see M. de Jonge, ed., *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (PVTG 1.2; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 77–78.

24. Translations mine. For the full translation, see H. C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *OTP* 1:775–828; and M. J. de Jonge, "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (ed. H. F. D. Sparks; Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 505–600.

25. R. B. Laurin claimed that the *Hodayot* cannot be attributed to the Essenes because they do not contain a belief in the immortality of the soul or the body. Laurin, "The Question of Immortality in the Qumran *Hodayot*," *JSS* 3 (1958): 344–55.

26. I wish to thank the Israel Antiquities Authority for allowing me to study 4Q521 and for clear photographs of all fragments.

27. The verbs are plural, so I have added "all." This reconstruction is supported by the *kôl* (e.g., "all") in line 4.

28. For Hebrew text, see S. Schechter, "Geniza Fragments," *JQR* Old Series 10 (1898): 656–57. My rendering is based on the translation of J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (*Studia Judaica* 9; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 26–27.

29. See Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 26.