
Soul & Body: The Developments of the Ideology of Resurrection in Ancient Israel

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Abstract: The Jews who returned from the exile, Later Jews who lived after the exile and the Early Church who have gone through intense persecutions elevated the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead as if it was the most important of all biblical doctrines. This notion has made some scholars to think that the idea of resurrection emanated from the exilic periods simply because the Jewish people suffered. Using the ancient Israelites views on the conceptions of the soul together with their burial beliefs, this researcher argues that the ancient Israelites beliefs in the afterlife which evolved into the doctrine of resurrection were visible even before the exile. Certain beliefs and practices of the Israelites suggests that their beliefs in the resurrection of the dead pre-dates the exilic periods. The purpose of this research is to show traces of resurrection beliefs in ancient Israel before the exile and to argue that the persecution of the Jewish is not the only reason behind the development of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.¹

Keywords: Afterlife, Body, Burial, Exile, Death, Life, Resurrection, Soul

1. Introduction

1.1. Death and Resurrection

There is yet to be a universally-specific definition of death as various peoples of all times and of all cultures viewed death differently. In medical science for instance, death is generally defined as the absence of life characterized by the complete malfunctioning of vital body organs (somatic death). Six minutes after one is certified dead, and when resuscitation is not possible, such a person could clinically be declared dead (Halsey & Johnston 1989:758). One can only be declared dead when the heart and brain impulses fail to function (Moody 1975:196-199). According to African culture, death is not defined as the end of life but the continuation of life journeys. In other words, life is not perceived as the opposite of death just as death is the opposite of life. Africans thought that the dead who are superiors over humans lived alongside humans and at the same time the dead lived in the otherworld (Opoku 1989:19, Mbiti 1977:110).² The Mesopotamians saw death as a way of

all hence to them; death is inevitable (Cooper 1992:21). The Zoroastrians of Persia believed that after bodily death, the souls of both the righteous and the unrighteous met with Ahura Mazda (MacGregor 1992:60, Spronk 1986:29). Christians and Muslims alike thought that death is not the end of life, meaning the dead who are good by serving their gods shall resurrect to live a blissful life with God or Allah (cf. Agai 2014: 68-69).

The various views on death by different cultures and by different peoples of all times are indication that the concept of death is vital in human history. Turner (1993:1) notes that researches done by anthropologists, archaeologists and historians suggests that the beliefs that death is a journey stems from primitive practices of many cultures throughout human history. Rensburg & Eck (2008:1499) thinks that there are few people who can honestly say that they have no interest in the study of death and afterlife, for which even those that often feel uncomfortable talking about the subject still desire to know what, would happen to them after death. It is therefore not a surprise that in recent times, there seemed to be more interest by scholars to study Old Testament themes on death than on life (Knibb 1989:402).

¹ The dating of the writing of certain biblical passages are based on the specific resources used for this research.

² The Yorubas of Nigeria for example believe that the ancestors are charged with

the responsibility of overseeing that the living live out their life span as allotted to them by the gods so as to avoid premature death (Eades 1980:122).

Seems death is inevitable and cannot be prevented or avoided by any form of knowledge in the past and at present, it became pertinent for peoples of ancient cultures to devise a knowledge or a means of understanding that presented the bereaved with some kind of comfort that the deceased lived. This could have been a possible precursor for the beliefs in life after death or for the beliefs in the resurrection of the dead. Murnane (1992:35) suggest that in human effort to come to terms with death, humans developed an attitude which regards death as a normal rite of passage and not as a terror or a threat. While other Semitic Peoples questioned the phenomenon of death as the end of life, the ancient Israelites may not be excluded in the search for their own meaning of death and resurrection. The Israelites for example perceived Yahweh as having power over death and life (Ex 4:24-26, Jug 6:7, 1 Sm 2:6) (Herrmann 1977:162). Death was also perceived as a form of divine punishment (Gn 20:3; 7; 38:7; 10:24, Ex 22:24, Nm 11:1, Dt 32:22) and as a normal route to human destiny "the way of all the earth" (1 Ki 2:23). Furthermore, the death of someone at an old age was seemingly accepted in ancient Israel as "normal."³ For example, when Jacob discovered that Joseph was not dead as he had thought, he commented that he would die happily because he had seen his younger child alive in his (Jacob's) old age.⁴ For the Israelites, it was a kind of blessing to live longer. Methuselah was said to be the oldest man that has ever lived, he lived for 969 years thus a blessing (Kaplan 1993:17-22). Doermann adds:

A long life, another form of blessing from Yahweh, with the honor and prosperity connected with it, was one of the highest hopes of the Hebrew. When he had lived his life and was 'full of day,' he died a 'good' death- it was the natural end of a blessed life and was faced serenely and without fear in the knowledge the he would be 'gathered to his fathers' or 'to his people' (Doermann 1961:213).

As a response to death, the Israelites lamented when their loved ones died (Gn 37:35; 2 Sm 15:32) and proper burial was also regarded as an important ritual for disposing the dead.⁵ Israelites regards for God as the highest and the only Supreme Being and as the creator and giver of life (cf. Overman 1952:231) indicates that they too like other Semitic Peoples knew that God had power to raise the dead. While some scholars argue that the Israelites concept of resurrection only post-dates the exilic periods, Bronner (2013:1-2) believes that the Israelites concept of resurrection pre-dates the exilic periods. She argues that there are traces of the afterlife beliefs in the Old Testament which evolved to their conception of resurrection. The question arises, what is the meaning of resurrection and how did they ancient Israelites

perceived the concept of resurrection before the exile? Generally, the word "resurrect" is a verb which means the acts or the arts of bringing back into use something or a belief system or a practice that has disappeared or have been forgotten. More so, the word "resurrection" is a noun describing a returned to life from death. Christians use the term resurrection to describe the return of Christ from death and to describe the rising of human beings in Christ at a particular point in time after bodily death (Hornby 2001:1004-1005 cf. 1 The 4:16). Bronner (2013:2) says that the word resurrection comes from the Latin word *resurrectus* which means to rise again. She adds "Resurrection is defined as the belief that in the future, the dead will rise from their graves, bringing about a revival of the whole person, body and soul" (Bronner 2002:2).⁶

The Israelites likewise the Early Church's concept of resurrection can be stratified into three spheres: firstly, resurrection as a revival from an unworthy state of life;⁷ secondly, resurrection as the restoration of the dead back to normal life, as in the stories of Elijah (1 Ki 17:17-24) and Elisha (2 Ki 4:18-37; 13:20f) and thirdly, resurrection as the conferring of a new permanent and celestial body unto the deceased in which the resurrected deceased possessed certain supernatural features. Such type of resurrection is mostly emphasized in the New Testament. The latter form of resurrection is what the New Testament Church expect would happen to them at the Second Coming of Christ (Mckenzie 1965:731). Although it is not clear how the body will resurrect and how it will look like after resurrection, yet some authors think it will be a celestial body similar to the one Christ had after his resurrection (1 Cor 15:1ff cf. Hick 1985: 279). In this research, resurrection will not be discussed as living "healthy" (Loader 2005:683-684) or as strictly the conferring of a new celestial body but as an understanding that the body and the soul possessed the ability to rise or to live again in another state of life and in another world like Sheol.

1.2. Research Focus

There is no doubt that the exilic experiences of the

3 The death of an elderly person was regarded as the death of a person who had lived a fulfilled life by accomplishing the purpose of his or her creation. It was less painful (compared to the death of a younger person) to the bereaved when an elderly person died because ancient Israelites believed that such an elderly person who had died had only gone to rest at a good age from the problems of life on earth hence a normal death.

4 (Herrmann 1977: 161-162).

5 (Maynard 1997: 60-61).

6 Some scientists think that Einstein's law of relativity suggest that the mind can live independently of the body thus surviving bodily death, however, others object to this argument due to insufficient or lack of evidence. There is no doubt that contemporary study in the fields of parapsychology and quantum physics are making a huge contribution in the scientific study of life after dead (Harpur 1991:98; Ma'SU'mian 1996:138; Trueblood 1963:137; cf. Tajuddin & Biswas 2015:168-169).

7 James Alfred Loader discussed in detail the concept of "life" in relation death in ancient Israel, and he describe Israelites understanding of life as living in a healthy way where illness or misfortune or unhappiness are exempted from human experiences (Loader 2005:683-684). This kind of definition of life is similar to one of the many Israelites understating of "resurrection" where Yahweh desired that the Israelites especially those obedient to his tenets lived a healthy life. Many scholars believe that the "rising of the bone" analogy in Ezekiel 37 is precisely about the well-being or the healthiness of the Israelites and not about physical resurrection with regard to the rising of the dead (Bronner 2013:9-10). Knibb (1989:407) also thinks that Ezekiel (37:1-17) might not also be used as a passage which supports possible Jewish beliefs in the resurrection of the dead because it refers rather to the restoration of Israel.

Israelites influenced their thinking concerning the resurrection of the dead.⁸ The Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BCE, the invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (586 BCE), Nebuzaradan (589 BCE) and the Persians led to the persecution and ill-treatment of the Israelites. Judah failed to exist as a nation and the Temple destroyed as a result (Ps 87:1-7) (Jagersma 1978:175). Jewish faith was also subdued after the invasion of Israel by Alexander the great (Harpur 1991:130). The Hebrews began to think that resurrection should be categorized in the sense that the wicked ought to be punished and the righteous rewarded⁹ (Ma'sÚmíán 1996:28).

The wide-spread persecutions which took place in the second and first centuries B.C. were influential in bringing about a marked change in the theology and eschatology of the Jewish populace. Surely God would not stand idly by, while his righteous ones were being slaughtered, unless he had plans to reward them after death. Surely God, in his righteous anger, had more than a neutral existence in Sheol in store for those who profaned his name, desecrated his temple, and persecuted his people. God, if he were God and the righteous Jew knew that he was, would triumph, and all those faithful to him would triumph with him and share in the eternal victory. Thus hope came to be centered almost entirely in the future, beyond history (Agai 2011:190).¹⁰

The people of Israel began to question the power of God to deliver them and some of them thought that it makes no difference to either be righteous or evil seemed the same fortunes of life falls on both the righteous and the wicked (Bernstein 1993:155).

You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evil doers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape' (Mal 3:14-15).

One man dies in full vigor, completely secure and at ease, his body well nourished, his bones rich with marrow. Another

man dies in bitterness of soul, never having enjoyed anything good. Side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both (Jb 21:23-26).

The Psalmist (73:3) also admitted to this when he said "For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." This view is in line with the words of the writer of Ecclesiastes chapters 8 and 9 "This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all.... (9:3). Ideas of an expected attitude of God towards both the righteous and the unrighteous made the Israelites to raise questions on the justice of God proceeded by the idea of moral death. Will death be the end of life? Will there be no separation of the wicked and the righteous in Sheol (Bernstein 1993:156-159)?

The argument raised by a number of scholars is that without the persecution of the Israelites, the idea of resurrection would not have been developed the way it is. However, this researcher intends to show that the ideas of the afterlife which later evolved into an established yet, chronological and ideologically varied doctrine of resurrection existed among the ancient Israelites before their exilic experiences. The researcher points out that it is not only Daniel 12:1b¹¹ or Isaiah 53:10-12¹² that firstly and clearly portrays the concepts of resurrection. This researcher argues that the Israelites conception of the soul likewise their attitudes towards burial portrays that they had ideas of resurrection before the exile. Few among many biblical passages which support resurrection motifs before the exile are:

- Deut. 32:39 "...I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand."
- 1 Sm. 2:6 "The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up."
- Ps 16:10-11 "because you will not abandon me in the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." The stories of resuscitation in 1 Ki 17:17-22 and 2 Ki 4:34-37 supports the Israelites beliefs that the dead can resurrect.

Israelites regard for God as an all-powerful, omnipotent and omniscient God is one of the main reasons which made them to believe that God had power over death. They knew that death could not separate one from the presence of God (Ps 139:8) and that their God was powerful and different from other gods (Canaanites gods) because they thought their God was a living God (Jos 3:10, Ps 42:3, Ps 84:3, Dan 21, 27) (Bronner 2013:2). It should be of note that early Israelites

8 The themes for this research shall focus on biblical books that speak about the afterlife or resurrection and were not influenced by Israelites exilic experiences. Although scholars differ on the dates certain biblical books were written, this researcher shall concentrate on the suggestions made by David F. Hinson. The Torah is important in this study. It is said that the Torah were possibly written sometime between 650 and 400 B.C.E. (p.55). Other vital Historical Books used in this research like Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings covers the history of the Israelites from their settlement in Palestine through their Babylonian exile; hence the writers may not have been influenced by the exile (p.63). It is not known when and who wrote the Book of Job, most scholars say the Book may have been written by more than one author (p.103). The contents in the book of Job shows that it is written before the exile. Scholars differ on the specific date by which the Book of Psalms was written but they agreed that almost half of the Books were written by David. Some scholars' say the Psalms were written before the exile, yet, others say they were written after the exile. Others say some Psalms were written before the exile (e.g. Ps 5:6; 45:1, etc.) while others say after the exile (e.g. Ps 126; 137) and this researcher accepts the later (pp.107-108) (cf. Hinson 2005). The Psalms and other biblical passages used to illustrate the subject of this research were said to be written before the exile.

9 Martyrs were accorded greater respect and chances of resurrection (Maynard 1977:298, Craffert 1999:49-50).

10 Originally from Doermann 1961:295.

11 Daniel 12 was written sometime around 168 BCE during a period of the Maccabean uprising (Craffert 1999:45-50). This passage clearly expresses the resurrection of some, or perhaps all of the Jews (Knibb 1989:407).

12 It has been traditionally believed that Isaiah (53:10-12) is explicit on the resurrection of the servant yet the concept of resurrection in this passage is not precise (Knibb 1989:408). It is not clear whether the passage strictly speaks about the resurrection of Christ or the resurrection of all those that Yahweh had chosen but the idea that the dead will resurrect is explicit. Other scholars like Whybray (1975:171-183; 1978:79-106) argued that Isaiah 53 has nothing to with resurrection nor the death of the servant (Knibb 1989:408). Other biblical passages written before the exile suggest that resurrected human beings would become like stars, angels, or gods (Jug 5:20, Job 38:7 cf. Craffert 1999: 58-59).

conception of the afterlife which evolved to their formal teaching on resurrection influenced later Jews and the New Testament regard for the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees for instance prioritize the resurrection of the dead (Hindson 2001:198). They believe that the souls of humans will leave forever: "They [Pharisees] say that all souls are incorruptible; but that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies, but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment" (Craffert 1999: 57).

The Sadducees on the other hand were said to be wealthy people and that they denied the resurrection of the dead and the existence of any kind of spiritual world. They do not even believe in angels or spirits (Lk 20:37, Mk 12:26, 27 Mt 22:31, Ac 23:8) (Smith 1975:598): "They [Saducees] also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishment and rewards in Hades" (Craffert 1999:57). The Samaritans like the Sadducees do not also believe in resurrection (Mt 22:23, Mt 12:18, Lk 20:27) (Mckenzie 1965:731). The Essenes had an idea of resurrection yet to them, resurrection was not an important issue. They thought that they were like angels or were righteous due to their disassociation with communities: 'For their [the Essenes] doctrine is this: "That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that their souls are immortal, and continue forever..." (Craffert 1999:54-55). The New Testament also emphasized the doctrine of resurrection as fundamental to Christianity. Paul once said without resurrection, Christianity would have been meaningless (1 Cor 15:29). Resurrection was also emphasized in the Apostolic Creed by the early Church and after the persecution of the Church by the Aelfric Goths; St. Augustine of Hippo admonished Christians to hope for a resurrected life in Heaven in the *City of God* (Boer 1976: 159-160). The various biblical and historical developments on the doctrine of resurrection which first emerged from early Israelites conception of the afterlife and resurrection are indications that the subject is relevant in biblical studies.

Some scholars think that the biblical idea of the resurrection of the dead is a result of Jewish and Christian's sufferings which they think started during the exile. In other worlds, there would have not been the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the dead if the Jews or Christians had not suffered or been persecuted. While Russel calls on people to embrace science as the only solution to human misery, he discard the idea of resurrection, of heaven and of hell. Bertrand Russel¹³ thinks that the beliefs in life after death have destroyed many religious peoples to think about reward or punishment in the afterlife. He particularly criticized Christians for giving the doctrine of hell an importance it does not deserve. He also condemned the Christ of the Gospels for admitting and identifying with the doctrine of

hell as a place of punishment: "I must say that I think all this doctrine that Hell fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations a cruel torture; and the Christ of the Gospels, if you could take him as his chronicles represent him, could certainly have to be considered partly responsible for that" (Russel 1927:23-26). Turner (1993:3) comments that amongst all the religions of the world, Christianity is the only religion that regards hell with great importance "...no other religion ever raised Hell to such importance as does Christianity, under which it became a fantastic underground kingdom of cruelty, surrounded by dense strata of legend, myth, religious creed, and what, from a distance, we might call dubious psychology." Turner (1993:3) in his view about a place for the punishment of the wicked in hell emphasized that the Christians construct on hell are strictly imaginary ideas propounded by few individuals whose aim is to shape the society according to their norms and ideals. He stressed that "the landscape of Hell is the largest shared construction project in imaginative history, and its chief architects have been creative giants-Homer, Virgil, Plato, Augustine, Dante, Bosch, Michelangelo, Milton, Goethe, Blake, and many more."¹⁴ The purpose of this research is to find traces of resurrection motives in the activities of the ancient Israelites before the exile so that it can be argued that persecution and suffering are not the main reasons for the development of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

2. Resurrection Motives & the Perception of the Soul

There was a belief amid early Israelites that Yahweh had originally created human beings to be immortal (Gn 2:17; 6:1-8, Is 65:20) (Knibb 1989:4020) until the Fall of Man. It reads "...for when you eat of it, you will surely die" (Gn 2:17) and Man was cursed after eating the fruit (Gn 3:22-24). Some scholars think that because man did not die on that day he was cursed, it thus meant that human beings naturally do not die because they have souls that survives death. However, the figurative translation is not supported by the literal text which reads "dying you shall die" (Gn3:17 cf. Eze 3:18-19; 18:4; 20). Bacchiocchi says that the actual meaning of the passage indicates that God intended that the day Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the middle of the garden; death began as a progressive process, and that the impacts of the curse was expected to be transitional. After the curse, the status of Adam and Eve changed:

From a state in which it was possible for them not to die (conditional immortality), they passed into a state in which it was impossible for them not to die (unconditional immortality) (Bacchiocchi 2013:14).

¹³ Russel was an atheist and his opinion was reproduced in the form of a lecture delivered at the Battersea Town Hall on Sunday, March 6, 1927 with the support of the National Secular Society, South London Branch. It became issued as a booklet form at the suggestion of many people. It should be noted that Russel's opinions were his alone because his views never went through an intensive scrutiny by the National Secular Society.

¹⁴ Alice K. Turner does not believe in the reality of the existence of hell, the intention of this writer seemed to be geared by the fact that Christians over-emphasized the concept of punishment after death (Turner 1993:3). The writer's presentation on hell were not aimed at defending the faith but were aimed at opening up Christian hoax over the doctrine of hell.

The above status of Adam and Eve suggests that generally, ancient Israelites thought that Yahweh had originally created humans with an immortal soul (Kaplan 1993:17). Davies (1997:119) emphasized that medieval Jewish philosophers believed in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, however, they emphasized the resurrection of the soul than the resurrection of the body.¹⁵ He noted however that the Talmud tells more on the resurrection of the body than of the soul. This could be why many authors believe that the Israelites accept the idea of the immortality of the soul likewise the body which would have to be recreated in another form after death (cf. Davies 1997:119). Spronk (1986:32) says that it is likely that Pre-Yahwistic period encouraged a dichotomic perception of body and soul and Yahwism encouraged trichotomy ideas:

The dead is still a soul, but a soul that has lost its substance and strength: it is a misty vapour or a shadow. Even after death the soul still maintains its intimate relation with the body. The dead body is still the soul (Spronk 1986:32).

Generally, ancient Israelites understanding of the creation of the soul also has implications on their thoughts concerning resurrection. There are basically three terms, which either refer or are related to the soul as used in the Old Testament. These terms are: *nephesh*, *ruach*, and *n^oshamah*:

- *Nephesh*- this is a noun used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to a 'living being' or some important activity such as appetite or emotion of a living organism particularly humans (Nemesszhy & Russel 1972:64-66). Furthermore, *nephesh ghaya* 'living souls' implies characteristics seen in both human beings and animals (Rust & Held 1999:253). However, when *nephesh* is used for humans, it primarily means 'what man has' or 'what man is'. It can also mean blood (Deut 12:23). It is important to note that in the Hebrew context, *nephesh* is not understood in contrast to the 'body' or 'flesh', for the fact that it is translated as 'soul' does not in any way mean the body is different from the soul (Nemesszhy & Russel 1972:64-66).
- *Ruach*- means 'mind' or 'spirit of God', likewise man's 'breath.' This term could interchangeably be used in like manner with *nephesh* (Nemesszhy & Russel 1972:67).
- *N^oShamah*- this is often translated as 'breath.' It is either directly coming from God (Gn 2:7, Job 32:8; 33:4; 34:14) or it could be used to refer to something God has produced (Isa 57:16), or it could simply mean 'man'. In the Old Testament, a related Hebrew term for body is *basar*, which describes the whole activities of man or humans. Again, it will be proper to note that in the Old Testament, there is no separation whatsoever between 'soul' and 'body' (Nemesszhy & Russel 1972:67).¹⁶

15 A fifth century CE Jewish text (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1) supports this assertion "souls of the righteous in the hands of God where no torment can touch there"(Davies 1997:119).

16 It might also have made sense for the ancient Israelites to believe that because the soul is the breath of God into Man, the soul would not have died: "And the

The ancient Egyptians mummified their deceased bodies so that the dead could resurrect through the rising of the body and of the soul.¹⁷ The Israelites did not mummify their deceased¹⁸ the same way it was done in ancient Egypt; yet, they think that the rising of the dead or resurrection involved the rising of the body and of the soul. This is so because ancient Israelites saw no separation between the body and the soul in the sense that those that believe in resurrection believed in the resurrection of the body and the soul (Hankoff 1980:3-28, Spronk 1986:32). This idea indicates that the ancient Israelites believed that both the body and the soul will resurrect and their conception of the body and the soul could have promoted their perceptions that life did not end at death.

3. Resurrection Motives & Burial Rituals

In ancient Israel, death was accepted as inevitable: "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave" (Ps 89:48)? Mankind had no power over death and like animals all will return to dust (Ecc 3:19-20):

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beast; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of dust, and all turn to dust again (KJV).

The Israelites developed certain responses towards death and the dead and these responses also indicate that they had a notion that the dead shall resurrect. Their views on mourning, believes in ancestors and their burial rituals carried alongside traces of resurrection motifs as discussed by some scholars. With regards to mourning their deceased, the Israelites lamented when they lost of their loved ones (2 Sm. 15:32, Gn 37:35). They performed certain ritual as part of mourning rites. Some of these rituals included staying without bath for a period of time, avoiding especially heavy duties, walking bare footed, not having sex, turning chairs upside down and many more. Mourning rite was intended for the mourner to have a sympathetic relationship with the deceased, to show a sense of commitment by the living to the dead, and sometimes to demonstrate respect the relationship one had with the deceased or recognize the role the deceased had played in the society before death (Davies 1997:120). Maynard (1977:101) says that one of the reasons why the Israelites mourn over their loved ones was because they do not believe in the immortality of the soul. However, there were other practices in ancient Israel which indicates that they might have believed in the immortality of the soul. For example, the funerals carried out by the ancient Israelites were carried out in the 'awareness' of the corpse, an act

Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gn 2:7).

17 With regard to the resurrection of the dead, mummification was aimed at glorifying the mummified body as Sah in Heaven (Spronk 1986:90) because the mummification of the body guaranteed resurrection (Davies 1999:27).

18 Loader 2005: 688.

performed in respect to the soul of the deceased. This Old Testament acts were passed unto the New Testament generation and that is why Rabbis from the second century through the sixth century AD visited the corpse in three days to anoint the corpse with oil. This act was a kind of demonstrative gratitude and respect for the dead and because the soul *lived*. Davies thinks that the fact that grave markers are also called *nefesh* suggests that Jewish people thought that the souls of the dead do remain close to the body and may move around sometimes (Davies 1997:120).

Furthermore, in ancient Israel, certain appointments and rites were determined based on ancestral origins. Priests had to be descendants of Aaron and even the fulfillments of God's promises were made through the ancestors of Israel like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gn 17:14, Ex 20:5, Dt 1:8). It was also a practice for some barren women to seek fertility and offspring by praying in the grave of the matriarch Rachel (Craffert 1999:68). Sometimes the spirit of the dead might also be recalled (1 Sm 28:13). It is not very clear if offering for the dead was practiced in Israel.

The Deuteronomic legal material ... reflects clear restriction against consulting the dead, giving offerings to the dead and engaging in self-lacerating ritual which [are] typical of Canaanite death cult practices. The fact that we have similar laws against black magic in the Covenant Code (e.g. Ex 22:17) argues such ideology may go back quite early. We may safely infer from these laws that cult of the dead existed and flourished in ancient Israel to the extent that they were considered a threat to what becomes normative Yahwism (Davies 1999:65-66).

Archaeological findings in Samaria let archaeologists to come across two pits, the pits were possible receptacles for offerings to the dead despite the disapproval of such practices by the prophets (Spronk (1986:37). McKenzie (1965:110) also noted that funerary deposits appeared in early Canaanites and Israelites graves and that the Israelites might have been influenced by this Canaanite culture:

In Judahite culture the dead were an integral part of the social organization. Individuals believed that their descendants would nourish and care for them following death, just as they provided for their predecessors. Moreover, the legitimacy of land holding was validated by the ancestor... Neither the existence of powerful dead nor the efficacy of necromancy could be negated (Davies 1999:63).

This practice could be an influence of Canaanites religious rituals on the Israelites. However, God forbids the worship of ancestors (Maynard 1977:19). The phrase "Resting with one's father" could properly be interpreted as an experience of joining the worlds of the ancestors, ancestors that were thought to have significant roles on the day-to-day affairs of human welfare (McKenzie 1965:106). The Israelites might not have worshipped ancestors as it is in most African societies but they revered their ancestors which also suggest that they might have thought that their ancestors lived to favor them or mediate for them during their prayers.

Thirdly, the proper disposition of corpse (s) is vital in study of Israelites conceptualization of resurrection. It was a

curse for the corpse of an Israelite not to be buried as in the case of Ahab and Jazebel (2 Ki 9:30-37). Jehoiakin was also dragged off and thrown at the gate of Jerusalem (Jr 22:19). These were the efficacy of curses pronounced against them. Another reason was that corpses were considered unclean and that is why corpses had to be buried within 24 hours (Dt 21:23) including the corpse of criminals (Maynard 1977:60-61):

You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I *am* the Lord (Lv 19:28).

Whosoever touched the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him (Num 19:13).

The reburial of Saul and his son (2 Sm 21:12-14) indicates that the welfare of the living could be affected by the nature of burial of a deceased loved one. Also, Yahweh brought an end to famine after proper funeral rites were performed for Saul and his sons. In the Chalcolithic (4500-3300BCE) site of Teleilat el Ghassul were found chests and urns in which the bones of the deceased were kept after a decay of the flesh (McKenzie 1965:106). Because deceased bones were gathered in repositories, such a practice could also support the expression "rested with his father's" (2 Ki 8:24 cf. Craffert 1999:66-68).

These acts of burial and reburial indicate Israelites view that a deceased had gone to join the ancestors. In addition, ancient Israelites thought that the reburial on one's own land had a lot of significance in the social scheme and most importantly in their perception of the resurrection of the dead. Jacob and Joseph's reburial suggests that only burial in one's own land could allow one to partake in the resurrection of the dead (Davies 1997: 120-121, Smith 1975: 94).¹⁹ In other words, resurrection was regarded as a kind of a family or clan reunification. The phrase "resting with the father" illustrated how the Israelites preferred that a deceased ought to be buried alongside his/her ancestor on the family land. Families formed clans and clans were knitted together to form a tribes therefore, burial and reburial in family graves allowed for tribes and families to reunite in a post-mortem world (Bronner 2013:2).

4. Conclusion

This research points to a knowledge that the ancient Israelites perception of the creation of the soul have contributed in their thinking of a possible afterlife. One of the reasons is that the soul is believed to be the breath of God and the breath of God by nature should have naturally possessed the ability to overcome death. Seems they made no separation between the body and the soul, it thus suggest that they also believed that the body would rise after death. Their conception of the kind of body that will rise after death is not

¹⁹ In Mishnah, the reburial of bones was linked to the belief that 'the sins of the dead had been atoned' (Davies 1997:120-121).

clear particular during periods before the exile. Other issues pertaining to their burial and reburial on family lands, their possible veneration or recognition of ancestors which might be a borrowed culture and their attitudes towards mourning have certain implications in the development of their concept of afterlife. Issues on burial as discussed suggest that the Israelites knew that life does not end after bodily death.

Furthermore, the ancient Israelites knew that the dead would end in Sheol, yet, their conception of Sheol is not consistent. Sheol was regarded as the destiny of *all* the dead (Gn37:35; 42:38; 44:29) and sometimes a place meant for *only* the wicked (Jb 24:19, Ps 55:15, Pr 7:27; 15:11, Is 14:15, Ezk 18:20). There were instances whereby Sheol was regarded as an unpleasant place for all its inhabitants (Dt 32:22, 2 Sm 22:6, Ps 16:10; 18:5, 116:3) and as a place where its inhabitants are retained forever (Job 30:23 cf. Doermann 1961:187-188) (Agai 2011:184, 195). Since the exilic experiences of the Israelites, the categorization of the inhabitants of Sheol became paramount and important. The idea of Sheol is important because it suggests that the Israelites knew that life does not end after bodily death. It is these kinds of early knowledge on the afterlife that have contributed immensely in the development of the knowledge of resurrection; and without these early conceptions, the ancient Israelites understanding of the knowledge of the afterlife, Later Jewish (Intertestamental Jews and later Jewish sects) and the Early Church would not have understood and emphasized the doctrine of resurrection as they did. In other words, ancient Israelites knowledge of the afterlife before the exile is fundamental in understanding the Later Jewish and Christian conception of resurrection. In conclusion, while it can be accepted that the persecution faced by the Jewish people during the exile and also by the Early Church intensified the development of the biblical doctrine of resurrection, this researcher points that persecution or suffering is not the *only* reason for the development of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; meaning, the ancient Israelites perceived or knew about the resurrection of the dead before the exile through their conceptions of the soul and the body in carrying out certain rituals over the dead.²⁰

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²⁰ Unto many Jewish people and Christians who suffer persecution today, it is important for them to note that, resurrection is a firm doctrine ordered by Yahweh and that it supersedes their sufferings: I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18 cf. 1Pe 4:13).

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