

Introduction

In this article we look at some of the implications of the belief in the resurrection of Yeshua. This is a word that is used quite loosely to mean “life after death” and or “the immortality of the soul.” But belief in the resurrection is neither just “life after death,” or “the immortality of the soul”.

Resurrection - What is it?

We get the word resurrection from the Hebrew: "Techiyat HaMetim" meaning the bodily resurrection of the dead; which one of the fundamental beliefs of the Jewish Faith. It is the last of the Rabbi Maimonides' (RAMBAM) list of thirteen beliefs which are recited at the end of the Morning Prayer Service in the Synagogue

"I believe with perfect faith that there will be a resurrection of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, blessed be His Name, and exalted be the remembrance of Him for ever and ever".

We should not be surprised at this because there is a Scriptural basis for this;

Passages in the Prophetic Literature:

- Ezekiel 37 The Valley of the Dry Bones. (Here the stories of corpses coming back to life may be metaphor for the renewal of Israel).
- Isaiah 26:19 Your dead will live- Their corpses will rise...
- Daniel 12:2 ...many of those who sleep in the dust...will awake...

Stories of the Maccabean martyrs. (Here, “Resurrection” clearly used as a concrete word for re-embodiment.) 2 Macc 7:14.

"When he was near death, he said, "It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the God-given hope of being restored to life by him; but for you, there will be no resurrection to life."

Jewish Views on life after death during the earthly ministry of Yeshua were varied.

- Sadducees, the ruling elite, based mostly in Jerusalem, believed in no life after death.
- Many believed in a continued existence in a “disembodied bliss.” The Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo, who blended Plato’s philosophy and Jewish tradition, was among those who took this view.
- Pharisees, believed in a bodily resurrection.

In the first century Jewish world, Resurrection was not a loose way of talking about life after death. “It was about God remaking, re-embodiment human beings to a new sort of life to live in the new world that God was going to make.”

In his book "*The Resurrection of Yeshua: A Jewish Perspective*," the Jewish scholar Dr. Pinchas Lapide says the following;

"When this frightened band of apostles suddenly could be changed overnight into a confident mission society... Then no vision or hallucination is sufficient to explain such a revolutionary transformation." 1988:125.

Remarkably, Pinchas Lapide believes Yeshua rose from the dead, but does not believe he is the Messiah. In his view, Yeshua was a Galilean rabbi of extraordinary righteousness. The rabbis of Jerusalem and Judea, the "establishment" as it were, thought very little of this hick rabbi from the far-flung north who attracted large followings. They opposed him and conspired with the Romans to have him executed. The Romans were only too happy to do this, fearful that Yeshua was a Messianic figure who could start a revolt. God raised Yeshua

from the dead, not because Yeshua was the Messiah, but out of mercy and in foresight. Seeing such a faithful follower killed unjustly, God raised him. God also had foresight of the effect that Yeshua's resurrection would have on Gentiles, drawing them to faith in one God and to read the Hebrew Scriptures. But the disciples then misunderstood Yeshua's message and God's purpose in raising him.

Resurrection - What did Yeshua teach?

For Yeshua and the Jews He taught resurrection was about a new Heaven and a new Earth, not just "going to Heaven". Resurrection involved not just redemption for individuals, but a new nation; a new creation. The Bible talks primarily about a new heaven and new earth and a re-embodiment in that new heaven and new earth, not about "going to heaven."

■ The Lord's Prayer: "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*"

Does not mean give us a little taste of heaven down here on earth, since we hope to live up in heaven someday. Rather, it means "praying the present life of heaven down onto this earth." God wants holiness and peace to live *here*.

Have you noticed that in the book of Revelation the church comes down to the earth to a shining New Jerusalem. It is a "downward movement, not an upward movement."
(Rev 3:12; 21:2)

In every one of the Gospels Yeshua speaks of His resurrection before the event.

Matt 20:18

- 18 Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death,
19 and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify *Him*, and on the third day He will be raised up."

Mark 8

- 31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.
32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

Luke 9:22

- 22 "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."

John 2:18-22

- 18 The Jewish leaders then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"
19 Yeshua answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
20 The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"
21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.
22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Yeshua had spoken.

The Shocking Claim of First Century Believers

The early disciples' claim that Yeshua had been resurrected from the dead was not strange to Jewish ears because of resurrection but rather because at least one had already happened. For Jews the resurrection was a community event which would happen to all the righteous at the time of God's choosing. The individual nature of

Yeshua' resurrection may have been an impediment to some Jews believing in Him. It may also have contributed to the doubt so evident in the disciples at first. Paul describes Yeshua' resurrection in community terms;

1 Cor 15:20-23

- 20 But Messiah has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.
- 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.
- 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Messiah all will be made alive.
- 23 But each in his own turn: Messiah, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

Resurrection - What does it mean for us?

1. New Respect for God's Creation

Rev 21:3-5

- 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
- 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."
- 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, *I am making all things new.*"

Romans 8:22-23

- 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.
- 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

2. New Hope for the future

1 Timothy 6:17-19

- 17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.
- 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.
- 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

3. New Meaning for the present

1 Timothy 6:17-19

To know these benefits in your life you must put your trust in what Yeshua did for you on the execution stake – then you can share in the benefits of His resurrection.

Romans 5:10

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death

of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Romans 6:5

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.