

# \*\*\*Yovel\*\*\*

18th issue/ February 2023

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"When once the existence of God guaranteed the existence of Israel, today the continued existence of the people Israel guarantees the existence of God."  
Emil Fackenheim

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ISRAEL  
THE FINAL CHAPTER OF THE DYNAMIC SAGA

The Sun is showing itself for the first time in months in Lapland. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

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"Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan."

(Lev. 25:9-10)

In Hebrew the fiftieth year is called **Yovel**, a celebration year, jubilee. It is the year of the blowing of the ram's horn. Thus Yovel got its name from the shofar announcing the beginning of the year.

The sound of the Yovel declares the beginning of a new era, the era of God's favour towards Israel. In Hebrew the word yovel can be read in two ways. Either "yovel", which means a ram or a ram's

horn like a shofar, or in passive voice "yuval", is led or was led, like in Isaiah 53: "he was led like a lamb to the slaughter... for the transgression of my people he was punished."

Like a lamb which has a desire to follow its shepherd humbly, to be led, "yuval".

The three names of the shofar are like a road signs on our salvation path: **Keren**, which is the name including the personal calling, rose up in smoke with the sacrificed ram instead of Isaac (Gen. 22:13). On Mount Sinai the Israelites heard the sound of that horn, **Shofar**, for the first time when it called the people to make the change, a turn a round, teshuva.

The nation learned the sound of the shofar when The Lord himself blew the horn (Ex. 19:16).

From that point on the Israelites

were commanded to blow themselves on the shofar (Lev. 25:9), until The Sovereign Lord himself blows it, this time the shofar called **Yovel** (Zech. 9:14).

Then He will announce freedom, liberation, a jubilee to all nations, to all of those who will hear His voice.

Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus Christ, started his ministry in the synagogue declaring with the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 proclaiming good news to the poor, freedom for the captives, release from darkness for the prisoners and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor.

Proclaiming the jubilee, which is The Messiah himself.

In Him is the heritage restored, the one we lost in the garden of Eden. In Him is the essence of Yovel. (<http://torah-art.net>)

**Markus Nurmesniemi**



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# Editorial

## The Footsteps of the Groom

This issue comes out when almost one year has past since Russia attacked Ukraine.

Ruthless war is still going on and no end to its sight. On the contrary, Russia is now preparing its forces for another large scale attack.

Many are feeling helpless and uncertain of the future. There is a wide spreading fear of the third world war. West is wavering and divided. Energy crisis, inflation, Nato, electricity, fake news, riots. News are saturated with bad news. Lawlessness is increasing and everything is being bent.

Yet we don't have to be afraid. As someone who trusts Yeshua I can be sure of the results. There are events unfolding and they are telling us something. But can we already speak of the events of the Apocalypse being initiated?

Only God Almighty Himself knows. It is not for us to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority (Acts 1:7). But we are wise for keeping oil in our lamps and make sure that it lasts, for we do not know the hour of His return.

We are His house, Holy Temple, combined with individuals. Every one of us has a responsibility to be part of the building process. If we keep together and create connections, then the Lord moves as well. No man is an island. We must be as one, as Yeshua and Father are one, echad. Then we can be one with the Father and the

Son (John 17:21-26).

Then the house reflects the Father's Glory which is Yeshua, The Word of God.

Bare in mind, that house isn't build on certain denominations. It isn't build solely on messianic Jews or Pentacostals.

It isn't build on certain church. It is build upon every true believer. The ones who are willing to follow the Good Shepherd and wants to do by His will.

It wants to be ready for it's Groom. It wants to do all the deeds to it's neighbour which it would want to be done to itself.

It wants to spread the Good News of its King and to be His light to the masses falling into darkness.

But this, this is to be wanted now. The oil is badly needed. Some of the lamps are smoking badly. Let's ask the Lord for pure oil. Let's do it now while we still have some time left!

It is good to know the prophecies and the declarations of the Bible. The whole book is the word of God, from cover to cover. The Spirit of God makes it alive when we study it with prayer.

In any case, we are hearing the echoes of the final events already. When you see the day, encourage yourselves. Don't despair. There is still time to take hand of a lost one and guide him to the way, the truth and life. They are afraid now.

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Will you be the one who is courageous?

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You are now reading the second last Yovel. The last issue comes out, if God willing, next June/July. This magazine was established in Spring of 2017, at the same day when the jubilee, yovel, of freeing Jerusalem was celebrated.

In that year it became 50 years since it was liberated during the six day war. This magazine has been published for six years now, and we've had the privilege to enjoy fascinating articles of many distinguished scholars and Bible teachers. But let's not just yet throw goodbyes in the air. Have a blessed gregorian new year!

With blessings,  
Markus Nurmesniemi, editor

# Two Living Faiths and Seeds of Conflict



Carving of baby Yeshua and the wise men of the East. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

**Written by:**  
**John D. Garr, Ph.D.**

The destruction of the temple in AD 70 was not Rome's final act of vengeance against the Jewish people for their unwillingness to submit themselves to the imperial state's divine right to rule. The Romans left no stone unturned in their determination to capture and butcher Jewish rebels. The battles continued, with countless Jewish men, women, and children suffering violence and death at the hands of the Roman legions.

Even the impregnable citadel of Masada was overrun when they patiently constructed a massive stone ramp to its top and breached its walls. To their shock and dismay, however, the Romans found that all the Jews at Masada had chosen to take their own li-

ves rather than be killed by the Roman sword or forced into Roman slavery.

Sixty years later another ill-fated rebellion challenged Roman rule when Simon Bar Kokhba established an independent Jewish state which he ruled in AD 132–135. Simon fashioned himself the Messiah and was proclaimed such by no less a luminary than the great Rabbi Akiva.

In fact, the surname Bar Kokhba meant "Son of a Star," a designation derived specifically from the messianic prophecy recorded in Numbers 24:17. Because of Bar Kokhba's arrogant defiance of Rome, virtually all of the Israelite Jews were methodically hunted down and slaughtered, resulting in the virtual depopulation of Judea. Additionally, so many Jewish women were raped by Roman soldiers in the two Jewish wars of

independence that the rabbi, "out of pity for their plight, declared the resulting offspring to be Jewish, not gentile."

After the smoke had cleared, Emperor Hadrian razed the city of Jerusalem to the ground and then built a completely new city directly over its ruins, which he named Aelia Capitolina and dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus. The antisemitic emperor then forbade the Jews to enter their own capital city on penalty of death.

At the same time that the Jews were also being targeted by the Romans because of their faith, Christians were being murdered by the thousands throughout the Roman Empire. The original Jesus movement had long since opened its doors to people of all ethnicities who would

embrace the faith of Jesus. Though it based all the major tenets of its faith on the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures, Christianity was moved by the instructions of Jesus in the Great Commission to become a universal religion, embracing all peoples.

In effect, however, they were merely mirroring the efforts that the Jewish people had undertaken from 100 BC–AD 100 when they had obeyed one of the major tenets of the Mishnah, "Raise up many disciples" and had made proselytes to Judaism throughout the Mediterranean Basin. "Yes, for a time," says Shlomo Riskin, "we 'heard,' we obeyed . . . and we succeeded," for "Josephus, among others, records how Jews, together with the Torah, were spreading all over the known world, attracting huge

numbers of converts from every part of the Roman Empire.” In the nascent years of Christianity, therefore, both Jews and Christians were moved with intense missionary fervor, and, in the process, they often found themselves competing for converts. Indeed, many of the earliest Gentile Christians came from among the God-fearers and proselytes whom the rabbis had already led into the faith of Abraham.

There was no single authoritative Judaism during the first century of the Common Era. Instead, there were many Judaisms, scores of diverse sects of the Jews. James Charlesworth argues, “We should not think in terms of a monolithic first century Palestinian Judaism.” In reality, “there was not one ruling all powerful group in early Judaism; many groups claimed to possess the normative interpretation of Torah, Jerusalem and Temple. . . . There were . . . at least a dozen groups and many subgroups.” In typical Jewish fashion, there was extensi-

ve and vigorous intramural debate and competition among these communities, with each striving to make its views normative for all of the Jewish society.

In the earliest days of the Jesus movement, the growing numbers of the Jews who confessed faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord styled themselves as Notzrim, the followers of the Netzer, the branch from the root of Jesse about whom Isaiah had spoken. They also called themselves “The Way,” which was specific Hebrew terminology that connected them directly with a halakhah (“the way of walking”) that went beyond the halakhah practiced by the other Judaisms of that day, particularly those of the strongest Jewish sects—the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes.

In typical Jewish fashion, the Notzrim were not reticent about giving strong public witness to their experience of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. They argued that his resurrection was a witness to the fact that he was, indeed, the

Messiah. The larger Jewish community was filled with consternation over these claims, and the establishment (primarily the Sadducees) moved to suppress the growth of this new sect of Judaism.

In many cases, this led to violence and even to death. The first martyr in the Jesus movement was Stephen whose execution by stoning was supervised by Saul of Tarsus, an agent of the temple establishment. Then, James, the brother of John, was beheaded by King Herod Agrippa in the first act of what was to be a general persecution of the Jesus community.

Finally in AD 62, James, the brother of Jesus, who was widely respected throughout the Jewish community as “James the Just” because of his faithfulness to the Torah, was also executed.

Annas the younger, the high priest who orchestrated this travesty of Sanhedrin manipulation, was widely condemned by the traditional Jewish community for leading this action, and he was removed from

office for what amounted to juridical murder.

The Sadducees and other Jewish sects that led these attacks against the Notzrim could well have profited from the wisdom of the Pharisees, particularly that of Gamaliel, the disciple of Hillel the Great. In the tradition of prominent Pharisees such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who had argued against the Sadducean-Roman conspiracy to murder Jesus, Gamaliel urged caution in the relationship between the Jewish temple establishment and the growing Jesus movement in this plea to the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. . . . [S]tay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.”

Though the Sanhedrin acquiesced to Gamaliel’s wisdom for the moment, the Sadducean aristocracy simply could not counte-



An Altar in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi



**The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi**

nance the followers of Jesus, so they continued to foment persecution and violence against them, using both their own resources and those of the Roman authorities in efforts to quash the Notzrim. The growing conflict and the outbreak of violence against the nascent Jesus movement from both the Roman authorities and Sadducean-led temple establishment prompted their dispersal into other areas of the Middle East and the consequent spread and rapid growth of the movement. It was this dynamic that moved the Jews who believed in Jesus as Messiah out of their comfort zones and, in the process, ensured the survival and expansion of Christianity throughout the world. The Jesus movement would never have succeeded in taking Israel's light to the nations if it had remained cloistered in the confines of Palestine. The discomfort and dispossession that the earliest believers experienced became the means that God used to disperse the movement so that it could grow and impact the world with the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures. Another factor that also fa-

cilitated the spread of the faith was the Christian ideal of avoiding ethnocentricity and xenophobia so that the diverse Christian assemblies could be a unified body in the Messiah. The newness of the religion attracted special attention from the Roman government, which saw Christians as subversive to the state despite Christianity's general pacifism toward dominant governments. During those days of conflict, Rabbinic Judaism expanded a device that the Pharisees had long used against heretics into something that would become a wedge for further dividing Jewish believers in Jesus from traditional Jews. Probably in late Maccabean times, a nineteenth benediction, the Birkat ha-Minim, had been added to the eighteen benedictions of the Amidah. This benediction was, in fact, not a benediction at all, even though it concluded with the classic expression, "Blessed are you, Lord." Instead, it was a malediction and, therefore, an incongruity within the context of the other benedictions. According to David Flusser, the Birkat ha-Minim had originally been directed against "dis-

sidents, apostates and traitors—including those who delivered Jews to the Gentile government—and similar wicked men who separated themselves from the Jewish collectivity." Others suggest that it targeted those who rejected Pharisean positions on halakhah and those who accepted only the written Torah while rejecting oral tradition. Around the time of the Yavneh Council in AD 90, at the request of Rabban Gamaliel II, the Birkat ha-Minim, was expanded by Shmuel ha-Katan so that it specifically targeted the Notzrim with its imprecations. After this time and in many instances, the malediction came to be directed significantly against Jewish believers in Jesus as the language of the Cairo Geniza attests: "For apostates let there be no hope, and the kingdom of insolence mayest thou uproot speedily in our days; and let the Notzrim [Jewish believers in Jesus] and the minim [heretics] perish in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of life and let them not be written with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the insolent." The elevation of Notzrim to the top of the

list indicates the seriousness with which some Jewish communities viewed the Christian "heresy" and its danger to the well-being of Rabbinic Judaism. This rendering of the Birkat ha-Minim very likely formalized ideas that had been expressed in synagogues perhaps as far back as the time when Jewish believers in Jesus had been informally expelled from synagogues during the Master's ministry. When this form of the malediction was institutionalized in the synagogues of Rabbinic Judaism, it became impossible for believers in Jesus to speak these words against themselves or against fellow believers in Jesus when they prayed the Amidah. As the Jewish historian Salo Baron noted, therefore, the Birkat ha-Minim "represented the formal recognition by official Judaism of the severance of all ties between the Christian and other schismatic bodies, and the national body of Judaism." At that time, Jewish Christians were forced to withdraw from their traditional synagogues and to form their own synagogues or simply to join the fellowship of Gentile assemblies. The Birkat ha-Minim,

then, became a line of demarcation that was drawn by the rabbinic community between the only two Judaisms that survived after the end of the first century, Rabbinic Judaism and the Jesus movement. This action contributed greatly to the parting of the ways between the two faiths.

This development was another significant step in the sharpening lines that were being drawn in the self-definition of Judaism and Christianity vis-à-vis each other.

Though both faiths had clearly “emerged from the same matrix,” both struggled to define themselves in contradistinction to each other. Alan Segal gives this vivid description of the parallels in the development of the two surviving Judaisms: “One can speak of a ‘twin birth’ of two new Judaisms, both markedly different from the religious systems that preceded them. Not only were Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity religious twins, but, like Jacob and Esau . . . they fought in the womb, setting the stage for life after the womb.” As time passed,

Christianity came more and more to define itself as being “not Jewish,” while Judaism, in turn, began to identify itself as being “not Christian.” As Peter Schäfer has rightly noted, “What we call Judaism—more precisely rabbinic Judaism—emerged in constant exchange with and differentiation from Christianity.” Indeed, the very heart of Judaism’s ongoing relationship with Christianity was the “bold reappropriation of the originally Jewish ideas that had become the main markers of the new Christian religion.” Rather than maintain a fraternal relationship in which they could have agreed to disagree, both faiths sought to put distance between themselves.

The conflict between the two earliest Judaisms that survived the first century, Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, was unfortunate to say the least. Under those circumstances, it was understandable that the Jews who believed in Jesus could have viewed traditional Jews as their enemies. If and when they did so,

however, they should have remembered what Jesus himself had commanded them: “Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. . . . Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven.” They and all Christians after them would have profited from Paul’s approach to his fellow Jews who did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah: “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.” Christians were under two clear mandates from their Lord: “Agree with your adversary quickly,” and “Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you.”

#### **Restoration, Not Revolution**

The Notzrim were never intended by Jesus or his apostles to be a revolutionary movement that would introduce a completely new

religion for humankind. Jesus was not a revolutionary. He was not an innovator. He was, instead, a restorer. His ministry represented a reformation of restoration for his Jewish faith. In reality, Jesus was not a Christian; he was a Jew. He made no effort, therefore, to break away from the faith of his ancestors according to the flesh.

His primary allegiance was to the Tanakh, the written record of the Word of God; however, he also borrowed eclectically from the traditions advanced by the many Judaisms or Jewish sects of his day. At the same time, he was quick to denounce the traditions of each of those Judaisms that either obviated or went beyond the specific words of the Tanakh. The one theme that Jesus constantly employed to validate his ministry was the declaration, “It is written.” In fact, he refused to accept any testimony of support or authentication for his work—including the witness of John the Baptizer—unless it had been documented in the pages of Holy Scripture.

Jesus also maintained



The Dome of the Church of the Nativity. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

complete continuity with his own Jewish family and nation. "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," he protested when a Gentile woman approached him asking him to deliver her demon-possessed daughter. As a matter of fact, he even insisted that his disciples carry out his reformation of restoration only within the context of the covenant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "Do not go among the Gentiles," he commanded his disciples. Indeed, it was not until after his resurrection that Jesus instructed his disciples to "make disciples of all the nations." It was then that Jesus made provision for the faith of Abraham to be extended to all the nations and families of the earth, just as God had promised the patriarch some two millennia before that time.

Jesus' love for Jerusalem and its inhabitants was very much like that of any other Jew in his time. He had premonitions of the destruction of Jerusalem, and they pained him greatly. On one occasion, when his disciples were admiring the extraordinarily beautiful architecture of the temple complex, Jesus said sadly, "I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another which will not be torn down." Even in the last hours of his ministry as he looked out over the city of Jerusalem, his heart was filled with anguish when he cried out, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I wanted to gather the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. . . . Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!" The spiritual condition of Israel was heartbreaking to Jesus. Jesus' disciples learned very well the lessons on

the continuity of biblical faith that their Master had repeatedly taught them. After his ascension, they maintained continuity with their nation and their people. They continued to celebrate the Sabbath and the pilgrimage festivals. As long as the temple stood, they insisted on worshipping there. They also worshipped in the synagogues of their fellow Jews, and they maintained the synagogal system in their own community life. They unequivocally believed and practiced the Hebrew Scriptures.

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, did not hesitate to state this truth when he made his confession of faith before the Roman procurator Felix: "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets." Until his dying day, the apostle proudly said, "I am a Pharisee," not "I was a Pharisee before I was converted and became a Christian."

**From Inclusion to Exclusion**  
It was this absolute faith in the authority of Holy Scripture that prompted the Jewish believers to open up their faith to the Gentiles. Isaiah, in particular, had predicted this eventuality: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. Nations will come to your light . . . they will go up with acceptance on my altar." Amos had also spoken of the same prophetic agenda: "'In that day I will raise up the fallen sukka of David and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may

possess . . . all the nations who are called by name,' declares the LORD who does this."

These prophetic pronouncements began to play out in the everyday lives of the apostles. First, on the authority of angelic visitation and then by establishing a pragmatic apostolate to the Gentiles, the Jewish believers in Jesus who formed the nascent church moved to include Gentiles in their faith community.

Peter, the apostle to the Jews, was called upon by God to open the door of salvation to the Gentiles when an angel appeared to a Roman centurion in Caesarea Maritima, telling him, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come to us as a memorial offering to God," and instructing him to send members of his staff to invite Peter, the spokesman for Jesus' apostles, to come to his house. T

he following day, Peter fell into a trance as he was praying and was given a strange vision in which God commanded him to eat unclean foods. While the apostle was contemplating the vision, the Holy Spirit instructed him not to hesitate to join himself to Cornelius' agents who at that very moment were at his doorstep. In a miraculous replication of the Pentecost experience in Acts 2, the ministry to include Gentiles in the faith of Israel was given divine confirmation that neither Peter nor his fellow Jewish disciples could deny.

It was not long before God made it clear that he had called Saul of Tarsus, the zealot who had been a major persecutor of the early Jewish Christian believers, to be his emissary

to the Gentile nations. The apostles recognized the divine calling and the gift that had been given to Saul (now Paul), and they conferred upon him the apostolate to the Gentiles. Finally, all of the apostles and elders of The Way were summoned to Jerusalem to discuss the implications of God's move to include the Gentiles in their community. After much disputation over the issue of whether circumcision should be required of those Gentiles who were coming to faith in Jesus, the council concluded that only commandments relating to idolatry should be imposed upon them.

James, the leader of the Jerusalem assembly, added the weight of Amos' prophecy to validate the decision that the council had made: "With this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, After these things I will . . . rebuild David's fallen tent . . . so that the rest of humanity may seek the name of the LORD, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name." The success of Christian evangelism and missionary activity among the Gentiles soon changed the Christian community from being exclusively Jewish to being increasingly Gentile and finally to being predominantly, if not exclusively, Gentile in both demographics and leadership. Eventually, the church that had begun as a Jewish entity became a Gentile institution.

### **Supersessionism: Violating Divine Imperatives**

In the midst of what at first was an intramural conflict pitting Jews against Jews in the debate over what was to be normative for Judaism, particularly in relation to views about the Mes-

siah, the earliest believers in Jesus began to consider whether the message of the Kingdom of God was an entirely new concept that bespoke the emergence of a new religion. Jesus had made it absolutely clear, however, that he had no intentions of setting aside the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and starting a new religion. "Think not that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets," he said. Sadly, for centuries, Christians who have professed faith in Jesus have done everything possible to think of ways in which they could prove that Jesus really meant the opposite of what he clearly said. This scandal gave rise to the pernicious doctrine of supersessionism (replacement theology) which

maintained that Jesus destroyed Judaism and replaced it with Christianity. In similar manner, Paul gave fair warning to the Gentiles who had come to share the faith of Jesus and of his Jewish family by being grafted into God's family tree of salvation. The apostle understood that rumblings were already underway which would suggest that not only had Christianity replaced Judaism as God's religion but that Christians had also replaced the Jews as God's Chosen People. Paul was very emphatic in his denunciation of this incipient evil idea. "Do not consider yourselves to be superior to those other branches [the Jews]. . . . Boast not against the branches," he said with strong conviction.

Even in the days of Jesus and Paul, however, some followers of The Way were already violating the two simple divine imperatives: "Think not!" and "Boast not!" After that time, church theologians and ecclesiastical bureaucrats totally ignored both of these commandments and unabashedly engaged in both theological supersessionism, the teaching that Christianity had replaced Judaism, and anthropological supersessionism, the teaching that Christians had replaced the Jews.

And the evil seeds of these doctrines exploded into a harvest of thorns, briars, and thistles that were to torment the Jewish people for centuries and bring great shame and disgrace to

the Christian church in virtually all of its communions throughout the world.

By the time of the second century AD, some of the apostolic fathers had developed subtle supersessionism into an art form. In his "Dialogue with Trypho," Justin Martyr boasted, "We are the true and spiritual Israelitish nation, and the race of Judah and of Jacob and Isaac and Abraham."

While Justin did not yet seem to exclude the Jews, his message of Gentile Christian acceptance before God had moved a step beyond Paul's argument for Gentile inclusion when it used language that would evolve into an even more exclusionist posture toward the Jews. It was only a matter of time until the su-



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persecutionist teaching was carried to its logical conclusion when what had begun initially as an argument for Gentile inclusion was transformed into the final argument for Jewish exclusion. By the fourth century, the tragic transition was complete when John Chrysostom delivered his eight "Adversus Judaeos" homilies. These sermons have been rightly called the "most horrible and violent denunciations of Judaism to be found in the writings of a Christian theologian." In his quest to force Christians to choose between Christianity and Judaism, Chrysostom argued that all the Jews were guilty of the crime of deicide for the crucifixion of Jesus, and he spewed his venom against both the synagogue and the Jews, asserting that synagogues were the habitations of demons and that the Jews were fit for slaughter. Steven Katz has convincingly argued that Chrysostom's sermons actually became "the decisive turn in the history of Christian anti-Judaism, a turn whose ultimate disfiguring consequence was enacted in the political antisemitism of Adolf Hitler."

The stage was set for the coming onslaught of Christian violence against the Jews. Once the church adopted the teachings that Christianity had replaced Judaism and that Christians had replaced Jews, both

Judaism and Jews became expendable in their view of the economy of salvation. Then, many Christian leaders began to advocate for the destruction of the Jews, saying there was no reason for their continued existence. Some leaders, however, took a more sympathetic approach. Augustine, arguably Western Christianity's greatest theologian, took a less hostile tone, insisting that the Jews should be allowed to live, but only as Michael Kogan notes "in a degraded condition appropriate to a pariah nation" so that they might forever "bear a ghastly witness" to the terrible "disaster that befalls a once-favored nation following their sinister decision to become at worst a deicide people or, at best, one that willfully chose to oppose God's offer of salvation in Christ." With its adoption of the Augustinian perspective, the Christian church had forsaken the teachings of Jesus and Paul by adopting a posture of contempt for Judaism and for the Jewish people.

#### **Martyrs and Continuing Living Faith**

During the first three centuries of the Common Era, countless people from both Jewish and Christian communities became martyrs for their faith at the hands of the Roman authorities. Jews were slaughtered by the tens of thousands

when they demanded the right of self-determination and Rome moved to quash even the most insignificant act of rebellion against its dominion. Christians were also mercilessly murdered in equal numbers simply because Rome could not countenance their faith in Jesus and their refusal to accommodate the worship of Rome's pagan deities. In the case of the Jews, Roman persecution merely steeled the resolve of sages and people to weather the suffering and atrocities while remaining completely faithful to their ancestral faith. In the case of the Christians, the blood of the martyrs actually became the seed of the church, as second-century polemicist Tertullian maintained.

Indeed, the very word martyr comes from the Greek *martuj* (martyrs) which means "witness." The ante-Nicene fathers simply believed that Rome could not suppress the Christian faith by killing Christians, for the very blood they shed would bear witness to the truth and would effect the conversion of still more Christians.

In the end, only two of the scores of first-century Jewish sects survived. One was Pharisean Judaism which was transformed into Rabbinic Judaism, and the other was the Jesus movement, The Way, which ultimately became Christianity. These two Judaisms, both founded by Jews and

established on competing Jewish interpretations of the Tanakh, took the faith of Abraham and the teachings of Moses beyond the ashes of the holy city and the holy temple and beyond the martyrdom of countless numbers of constituents of both communities and propelled those faiths and those teachings into the future. The rabbinic community added the oral traditions of the sages as explication for Moses' writings. The Christian community added the teachings of Jesus and the apostles as the definitive and final revelation of the Word of God for the interpretation of the Tanakh.

While the two communities continued to debate over normative biblical faith, both of them stood as witnesses to the *gevurot*, God's powers to bring life from the dead. Both Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity stood unequivocally on the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Two faiths that should have been buried in the rubble of the city of Jerusalem not only survived but also flourished—all because of God's faithfulness to his Chosen People and because of his powers to bring forth life from the dead.

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# *Life from the Dead - In the Beginning*

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Life sprouts among the rocks at Mount Carmel. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

**Written by:**  
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The certainty that life will be restored at the end of days in the resurrection is predicated upon the fact that God created life in the beginning.

Indeed, as Kevin Madigan and Jon Levenson have observed, even the possibility of resurrection at the end of days is “rooted in the power of God at creation.”

The possibility and, indeed, the probability that God will raise the dead to life in the final resurrection was affirmed, even predicted, in the creative act by which God raised the first human being from the dust of the earth, from nothingness

into life. “The victory of God over death at the end,” therefore, “mirrors the primordial victory of the God of life at the beginning.”

Because the very earliest references to God in the Genesis narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures are affirmations that he created life from the dead, the Chosen People have every reason to believe that their God will effect the resurrection of the dead at the last day.

The God of the Jews proved his gevurot by bringing sterile, inanimate matter to life in the creation. The same God who, at the beginning of time, assembled the dust from the humus to form the first human and then vivified him with

his own breath will recreate that miracle at the end of time when he will keep faith with the righteous of all ages by bringing them forth from the dust of the earth in the resurrection.

Resurrection, therefore, was not just a novel first-century Jewish or Christian idea. God brought forth life from the dead in the beginning with the creation of humankind, and he will do it again in the end in the resurrection of the righteous.

## **The Dynamics of Creation**

Humanity did not eventuate upon planet Earth through evolution, beginning in a chain of random events initiated by electrochemical reactions upon

or within some primordial ooze and then developing through a series of genetic mutations from unicellular microorganisms into homo sapiens. Such ideas are figments of the imaginations of those who choose to believe the utterly impossible: that life generated itself from nothing. Indeed, there is no such thing as abiogenesis or biopoiesis, the spontaneous appearance of life (of any kind) from inert, inorganic matter through natural processes.

Self-generated life is an utter impossibility. The very existence of the universe itself—and of humankind—cannot, therefore, be the result of random, self-initiated natural events. The creation bespeaks the exist-

tence of the Creator, and humanity is living proof of intelligent design.

Physicist Gerald Schroeder has demonstrated this truth, noting that the universe itself cannot be said to exist as the effect of a natural cause, because “effects are separated from causes by time.” Because time did not exist before the universe was created, it is utterly impossible for the universe to have been produced by a natural cause.

Something far more profound was required: divine creation. As Schroeder has noted, therefore, “the universe must simply ‘be.’” It could not have been initiated by itself or by random chance. The fact that the universe is still in the process of expanding proves beyond doubt that it has never been, nor will it ever be, infinite.

It also establishes the fact that the universe must have had a beginning and that it could not have existed eternally. There is only one logical possibility: the existence of the universe—and, therefore, of humanity as well—is the product of creation by intelligent design.

Of necessity, every material thing that exists had to have been designed by the supra-intelligent Designer who conceived the universe, and it had to have been created out of nothing by the Creator who made it.

### The Challenge of Faith

Recognition of and belief in the divine design of the universe requires much

less faith than believing that the universe somehow evolved entirely through natural processes.

Robert Boyd is among the growing number of scholars who have recognized this truth: ‘

“It takes more faith to believe in the theory of evolution than it does to believe what the Bible says about creation,” he says. The theory of evolution is, of necessity, “a belief system,” as Michael Corey describes it, “because it subordinates the relevant empirical data to a previously held metaphysical bias, which in this case has to do with the unsubstantiated metaphysical belief that all biological causes must ultimately be the result of blind chance alone.”

Some evolutionists have even described their adherence to the theory of evolution as a “metaphysical belief.”

Henri Lichtenberger confirmed what Friedrich Nietzsche had proclaimed over a century before that time, “Our faith in Science is still founded upon a metaphysical belief and . . . we atheists . . . believe in this faith which inspires us to that form of incendiaryism.”

Consciously choosing to couch his own personal faith in evolution in the language of religion, Stephen Toulmin confesses that “evolution now becomes . . . the Source of Comfort and Reassurance.” As Boyd notes, evolution has, therefore, “shifted from ‘evolution as knowledge’ to ‘evolution as faith.’”

Regardless of the “faith” of

some of those who espouse the theory of evolution, the existence of humanity—and, for that matter, of the universe itself—is not the result of the actions of blind fate or evolution.

It was God who created human beings with all their distinctive qualities. His creation was by intricate, delicate, and super-intelligent—even supra-intelligent—design so that every individual human being and every aspect of human existence serve to contribute to the overall integrity and welfare of the human race and to the reflection of the divine image in creation.

The heavens and the earth and everything in them were, indeed, created by an act of divine will, not by means of sexual generation among gods, as most pagan religions have suggested.

The universe was produced by an explosion of divine creativity, not by random chance. All of creation was summoned into existence by the authoritative declaration of the divine Word, the person of God who created everything and who sustains everything.

Gilbert Bilezikian eloquently describes this act of creation in the beginning: “In majestic strokes and with cosmic vistas, the first page of the Bible sets forth the story of God’s dealings with mankind within the designs of creation.”

After God had spoken the inanimate universe into existence, he turned his focus toward the earth,

the place where he would deposit life in millions of organisms. God created the heavens and the earth.

After he created the myriads of species of plants and animals that would populate the earth, God’s final creative impulse was to bring forth his crowning creation, the one being in which he would manifest his own image and likeness.

Interestingly, the recorded account of creation had proceeded at a rapid-fire, staccato pace until it had finally reached the creation of humanity, at which time the pace slowed significantly “in reverent awe, as it were.”

With the formation and vivification of humanity, God was creating something entirely unique, something that had never existed before—life in his own image. In some ways, God seemed to bring forth a recapitulation of the universe when he envisioned and then created the human entity.

With humanity as the crown of all creation and as God’s delegated authority over it, it was as though humanity became a mikrokosmos, as John of Damascus described it, a universe in miniature, because all the many and diverse levels of creation were somehow to be contained in God’s human creation.

Maimonides too believed that human beings are a microcosm of the whole of creation, so that contained within each person are the elements of everything in the universe. Jewish mysticism also has sought to

explain how humanity is actually a microcosm of all the forces of creation, the recapitulation of everything that God had made.

### Something from Nothing

The mechanics of the divine creation was surely the prototype for the continuing power that God has manifest in bringing forth life from the dead and that he will yet manifest in the resurrection at the end of the days.

When Scripture speaks of the creation of the universe, it uses a very special Hebrew word, ar"b' (bara), which is the only Hebrew word that can mean "to create out of nothing" (creatio ex nihilo). Bara means to bring forth something new that did not previously exist.

The very first words of Scripture say, "B'reshit bara Elohim et hashamayim v'et ha'aretz" ("In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"). Since there is no Hebrew word for "universe," the phrase the heavens and the earth

is intended by this text to convey the idea that God created "everything." This establishes the fact that everything was created by God himself when he spoke the universe into existence.

The substance of the universe did not exist from eternity past and, therefore, coexist with God. The universe was created by God. Before this divine creative act, therefore, absolutely nothing existed except God himself.

The word bara is unique to the act of divine creation. It is used only seven times in the Genesis narrative of the creation of the universe. In these cases, as in all 38 additional times that bara is used in Scripture, God is the exclusive agent of the bara creation.

Walter Kaiser also notes another important point about the use of the word bara: "It happens to be a clear statistical fact that, out of the 45 times [that bara is used], there is no instance where he uses matter or any material."

This makes two things clear: 1) God is the only one who has the power to "create" in the sense of the word bara and 2) God can create "out of nothing." The word bara, therefore, describes the creation as being the product of a divine act that began with absolutely nothing and resulted in the existence of something that before had simply never existed.

Leon Lederman produced the following poignant summary of the conclusion that most cosmologists have drawn concerning the creation of the universe: "In the beginning there was void—a curious form of vacuum—a nothing containing no space, no time, no matter, no light, no sound. . . This curious vacuum held potential.

Then the nothingness exploded. . . Out of this energy, matter emerged. . . What a scene!"

Though Lederman probably did not intend to do so, he reached a conclusion that could not have described the details of the creation of the universe in

terms more consistent with the accounts set forth in the Genesis narrative.

### Tzimtzum: Making Space for Creation

The Hebrew text of Scripture, then, clearly demonstrates that creation out of nothing is the sole province of God himself. The question immediately arises: where was the "nothing" from which God created "something"?

Indeed, how could God have created the something of the universe out of nothing when it is clear that God himself has always been omnipresent, occupying everything, everywhere, and all time with his infinite presence. Simply speaking, there was no "nothing" from which God could have created something out of nothing.

If God had created the universe out of what preexisted the universe, then he would have had to have created it out of himself. Then, if he had done so, the universe itself would



Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

have been divine, and there would have been two gods, not one.

The idea that the universe is divine is the core principle of pantheism, the religion which teaches that nature itself is God.

Since God is universally omnipresent and since there was no nothingness from which he could have created something out of nothing, a true dilemma was present even before the creation of the universe.

There was, however, a profound and simple solution to this dilemma.

In order to have nothingness out of which to create the universe so that it would be certain that the universe was not created out of God and would not, therefore, be divine, God employed a divine principle that only he can use.

He simply withdrew his presence from a portion of infinity so that in that portion nothing existed. Then, he spoke physical reality into that void and by that divine word summoned

the entire universe to appear out of nothing. He commanded what was not, "Come forth," and the universe sprang into existence from of nothing.

Mystical Judaism has developed this idea by describing God's pre-creative action as *tzimtzum*, a form of divine contraction, withdrawal, or self-limitation. This Lurianic concept maintains that God contracted himself or withdrew from a part of infinity so that a conceptual "empty space" would exist where he could then create the universe "out of nothing."

Could God actually do this? Indeed, he not only could do so, but also did. If God is infinite and has absolute sovereignty, he certainly also has sovereignty over his own sovereignty and over his own infinity. God can limit his sovereignty and his infinity or at least he can vary the manifestation of both. This is *tzimtzum*, the power that God has to limit himself without being less than God and, therefore, not God. *Tzimtzum*,

therefore, is not "the opposite of God's omnipresence in the world, but it is a manner of its revelation."

### **A Formless, Lifeless Void**

God's creation was specifically designed from the beginning to ensure that a perfect environment would exist in which he could manifest his final and most glorious creation: humanity fashioned in his image and likeness.

In order to make human life possible, God set about to create an exquisitely perfect environment specifically designed to support and sustain life. He knew that life would be wholly contingent upon the profoundly complex and intricately counterbalanced systems involving sun, moon, planets, and earth functioning together in a cosmic dance that only God himself could have choreographed.

The first statement of Scripture, therefore, sums up the first and foundational truth: "God created the

heavens and the earth."

After God initially created the universe out of nothing, unformed, undefined, inert material existed. There was absolutely no life anywhere in the newly created universe.

The only life that existed was God himself, and his life transcended the finite universe in the infinity of his magnificence. This is reflected in the words of the second verse of Holy Scripture: "And the earth was formless and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep."

In the Hebrew text, the phrase that has been translated "formless and void" or "waste and without form," is *WhBow* *WhTo* (*tohu v'bohu*).

The use of the Hebrew phrase *tohu v'bohu* in this text has often been interpreted by some to mean that in some way and for some reason, God's creation either was originally imperfect, or it had become deficient or corrupted in

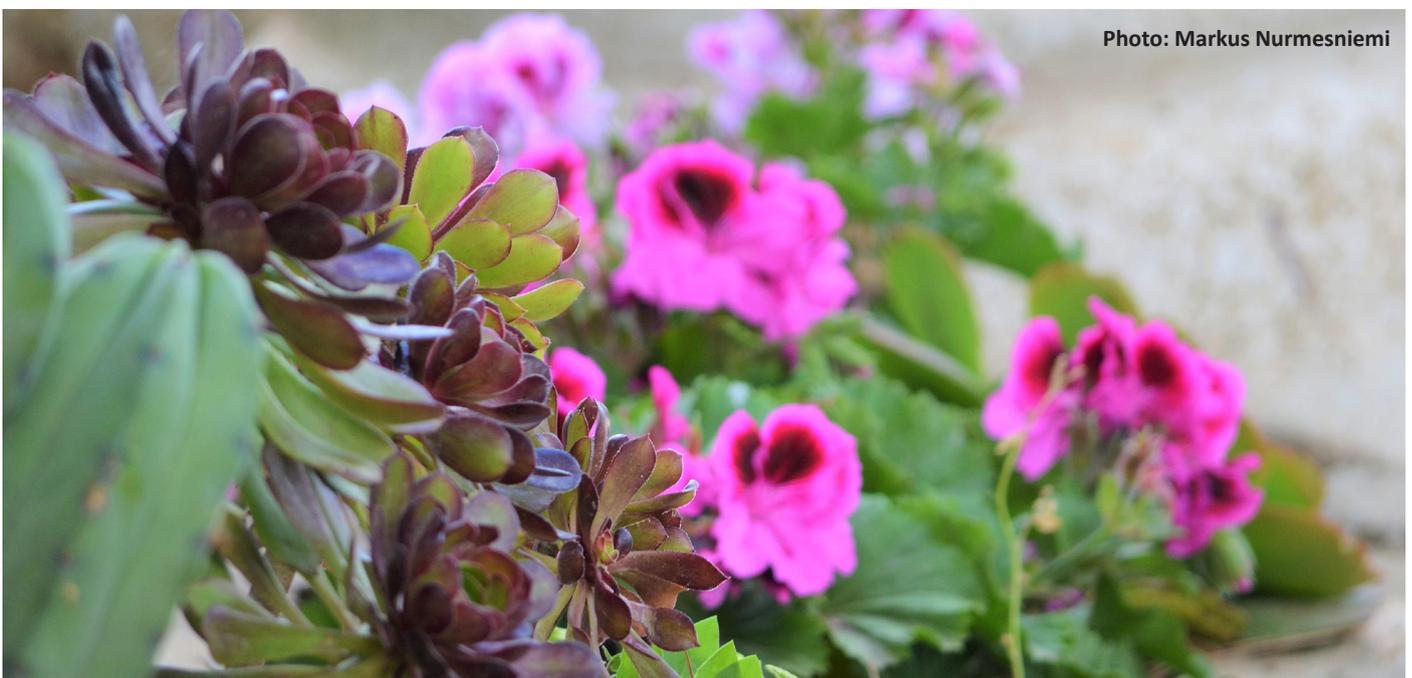


Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

some way, for God, in their estimation, could not have created anything that was not perfect at the time of its creation.

The truth is that the term *tohu v'bohu* simply indicates that what God had created as of that time was still, in Kaiser's words, "undefined matter."

It is very practical to conclude that God brought "matter into being," first making the "stuff" of creation and only then beginning the task of forming the undefined matter in order to "set order in each category" of his creation. In this way, "The systematic progression from chaos to cosmos unfolds in an orderly and harmonious manner," says Nahum Sarana.

Though the world originated as "an indistinguished mass," it "progressively develop[ed] into an ordered cosmos by the systematic application of God's creative power."

At this time, the Spirit of God "fluttered" over the face of the waters in a manner similar to that of a brooding mother bird. "God's wind foreshadows the agent and onset of the first creative act and all creative acts thereafter.

It announces God and his active role in establishing a paradigmatic world from a primal environment of chaotic indistinction," says Randall Garr.

The creation, then, was a divine activity that involved both the Word and the Spirit. This creative process conforms perfectly with the words of Isaiah which

declared that when "God . . . formed the earth and made it," the Lord "established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited."

God created nothing that was deficient or evil: everything he spoke into existence or crafted into its final form was good, even as the words of Scripture affirm.

### God's "Good" Creation

The second significant truth that is firmly and repeatedly established in the opening pages of the Genesis narrative is the inherent goodness of the creation. Everything that God created was good from the moment of its creation.

No part of the universe was bad or evil. As a matter of fact, six times in the first chapter of Genesis—and on each of the successive days of creation—God observed that what he had created was "good." Then, when he finally created humanity, the text says that the creation was "very good." In no case is it even intimated that anything which God created was evil or deficient.

This truth which is so firmly and irrevocably established in the opening lines of Scripture utterly nullifies the dualistic arguments of Greek philosophers and others who posited the idea that somehow the material universe is inherently evil. It also denies the Gnostic idea that matter was created by a demiurge, a craftsman who corrupted the divine order by making the physical universe.

Scripture, then, utterly denies the Greek philosophical concept that the material creation was evil. In fact, Hebrew thought considered everything which God created, both material and spiritual, to be inherently good, a manifestation of the divine wisdom and the supra-intelligent design by which God created everything.

Humankind was designed to experience and enjoy all of the material creation within the parameters that God subsequently established for the interaction between creature and creation.

Paul summed up this pervasive and undeniable biblical reality: "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself."

God's creation, then, was entirely good from the very beginning. It was precisely as God intended it. Nothing was by accident. There were no surprises, no accidents. Everything was systematically and efficiently manifest according to divine blueprints.

Even the *tohu v'bohu* state of undefined matter was as God planned it. The formless void and the darkness that covered the face of the deep were part of God's plan to provide the perfect environment, the biosphere in which he could bring forth the final perfect creation that he envisioned. This ultimate creation would produce the beings who would bear God's own image, making it possible to reveal the divine essence through love between

them and their God. Everything was by divine design. And, everything was very good!

### The Creative Power of the Spoken Word

Yet another profoundly significant truth is also established in the opening lines of the Genesis narrative. This was the incredible creative power of the spoken Word of God.

While the details of the creation of the universe are unfathomable, nevertheless, "by faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."

Understanding how the creation of the universe took place is achieved only by faith. The accumulation of finite, empirical evidence can never "understand" the dynamics of infinite action.

The record of Scripture is clear, however. Everything that came into existence did so by the voice of God which summoned it into reality out of nothingness. God is the only being who has the power to call "into being that which does not exist."

The Greek word translated "call" in this text is *kaleo*, which means "to call aloud" or "to utter in a loud voice." It carries the sense of issuing a summons, which is far more powerful than merely making a statement. God, therefore, uttered in a loud voice the summons which demanded that the universe spring into existence

from nonexistence. This is why the Psalmist declared, "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host . . . for he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

As S. R. Driver has said, "Things did not emanate from [God] unconsciously, nor are they produced by a mere act of thought . . . but by an act of will, of which the concrete word is the outward expression." Each stage in God's creative work, therefore, was the "realization of a deliberately formed purpose."

The very proof that God can be trusted to bring forth "life from the dead" and to "keep faith with those who are in the dust of the earth" has been demonstrated by the fact that he is the one who has always summoned "into being things that were not."

The power of the divine spoken Word is infinite, and it is faithful, never limited to the ebb and flow of time or to the exigencies of finite existence. What God has said, he will do. As Balaam, the prophet for hire, learned to his own chagrin, the God of Scripture speaks and faithfully acts; he promises and without fail fulfills his commitments.

This is what God promised Isaiah: "Truly I have spoken; truly I will also bring it about. I have planned it; surely I will do it." God does not just make notes: he speaks. And when he speaks, nothing can stand in the way of the dynamic power that his spoken Word commands. God's

Word works, and it will always, without fail, accomplish God's purposes.

It was clear to the Hebrews, therefore, that the Word of God was dynamic, not static, and that it was more associated with the power of divine speech than with the written record of God's sayings. This understanding of the creative power of the spoken Word of God was underscored in Hebrew thought that had developed at least a century before the time of Jesus.

By this time, the Hebrew term for "word," *rb'D* (*d'var*), meaning "speech, word, or utterance," had come to be associated with the *d'var* Torah, a teaching, exposition, or commentary on the written record of God's Word recorded in the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. Accordingly, many Jewish sages had come to associate the concept of the spoken Word of God more closely with the Aramaic term *memra* which had been used to translate the word *d'var* in the Targumim, the Aramaic translations of the Hebrew text of Scripture.

The term *memra* came to be preferred because it dealt exclusively with the idea that God's Word is imminent speech, a spoken or active Word, not a static or recorded record of that Word.

In the Targumim, moreover, the word *memra* was frequently substituted for the ineffable name of God, YHWH ("LORD") so that a Hebrew text that said, "God" or "LORD," would say, "Memra" or "the Word

(of God)."

Israel Drazin and Stanley Wagner maintain that was done in an effort to show respect to the honor of God by avoiding anthropomorphic and anthropopathic descriptions that might appear to ascribe corporeality to God and thereby detract from the dignity of his deity.

This paraphrasing translative device was used 357 times in the text of Genesis alone. Hence, when the Hebrew text said, "Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God," the Targum rendered the text, "Moses brought forth the people before the Memra (Word) of God." Similarly, the Hebrew text of Isaiah, which declared, "My hand also has laid the foundation of the earth," is rendered by the Targum, "By my Memra (Word) I have founded the earth, and by my strength I have hung up the heavens."

Over time, Jewish mysticism came to prefer the term *memra* in its descriptions of divine attributes because of its emphasis on the active spoken Word over the static written Word.

Daniel Whedon has also pointed out that the word *memra* more accurately describes divine revelation: "As mind manifests itself in the spoken word, so God, the eternal mind, manifests himself in the eternal . . . Word. . . . In the Targums we find the term Word (*Memra*), used for God revealing himself."

This concept was the foundational idea for the apostle John's teaching

that the Logos (*Memra*) was God and became human to reveal God.

As George Foot Moore observed, the Word of God was for the Hebrews a "concrete reality, a veritable cause." The spoken Word, therefore, was not just a simple "vocabulary . . . dropped from unthinking lips." It was "fearfully alive," a "unit of energy charged with power."

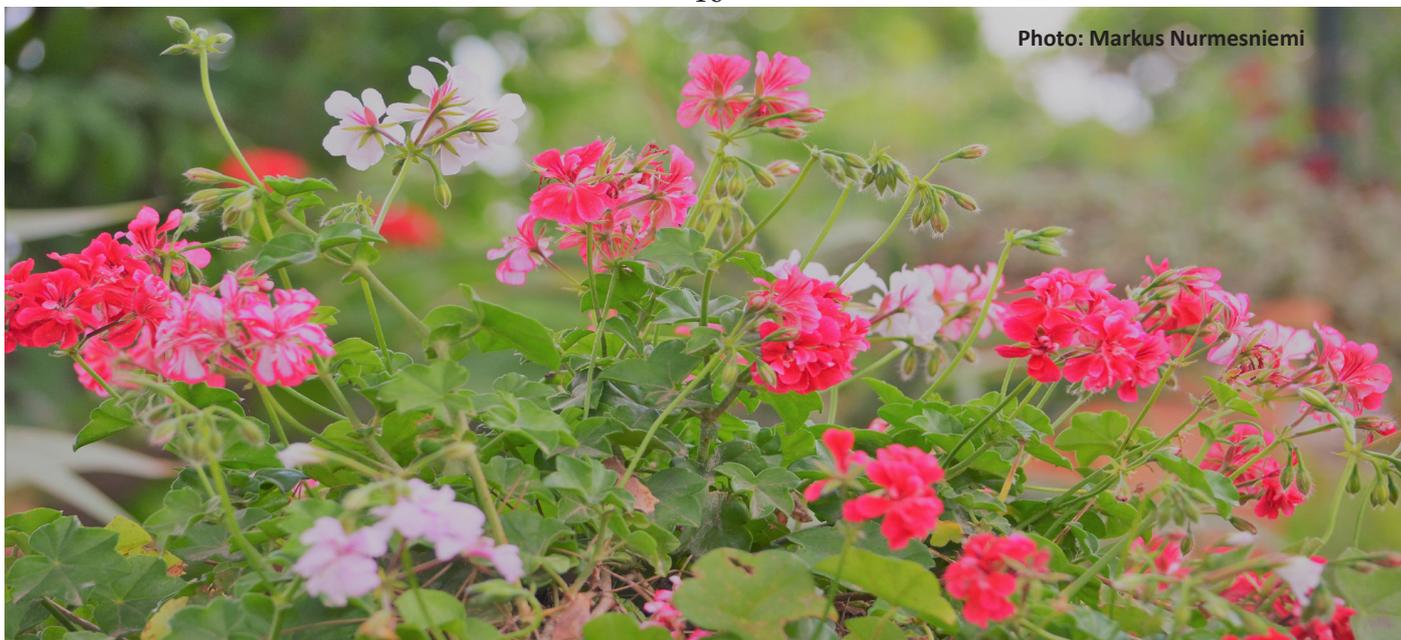
A. W. Tozer said it well: "It is the present Voice which makes the written word all powerful. Otherwise, it would lie locked in slumber within the covers of a book."

The author of the Book of Hebrews established this divine truth by saying that "the word of God is alive and powerful." This creative Word of God "is not a written or printed word at all, but the expression of the will of God spoken into the structure of all things.

This word of God is the breath of God filling the world with living potentiality."

This targumic tradition, in which the Jewish worshippers from the first century before the time of Jesus heard the word *memra* substituted for YHWH in the parashot (Torah portions) and the haftarah readings of the synagogue liturgy, likely prompted the language of the prologue to John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

It was also the foundation of John's understanding that the spoken Word of God was the agent of all



creation: "All things came into being through [the Word], and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being."

The apostolic thought that John outlined in his Gospel is anchored in rabbinic teaching as well, for the sages of Israel maintained that the Torah was created by God before he created the universe and that the Torah was the vehicle for creation.

This concept was codified in the second century AD by Rabbi Akiva who said that the Torah was "the precious instrument by which the world was created." This is why Gershon Winkler has said, "Torah is representative of the intention that went into the creation of existence, and as such it permeates every pore and crevice of the universe. It fills existence with what it is that inspired its creation to begin."

The apostle Paul further expanded this idea when he said that "by [Jesus, the living Word] all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible

and invisible . . . all things have been created through him and for him."

The apostles, therefore, were not introducing a revolutionary new theology with the pronouncements of their thought that connected the Messiah with the very Word of God. They were merely expanding prior rabbinic tradition with their revelation of the self-disclosed mystery of deity that had filled their lives with the light and life of the divine Messiah.

For them, the D'var, Memra, or Logos, who was the immanent, creative person or mode of transcendent divine being, was without a doubt the agent of all creation. God's Word was, therefore, more than mere speech. It involved action wherein "Yahweh causes to be by utterance." To initiate creation, therefore, God simply "said," and when he did, he unleashed the incredible creative power of the Memra, the mode of divine existence who is personified as the "Word of God."

This is why the first detail of creation was ensconced in these words: "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light."

The phrase and God said was then repeated eight additional times in the first chapter of the Genesis story.

On five of these occasions, the words and God said were followed by the simple declaration, "It was so." As Tozer noted, "These twin phrases, as cause and effect, occur throughout the Genesis story." When God uttered his spoken Word, the summoning authority of that Word immediately produced substantive, material reality.

The very sound of God's spoken Word was the generative force of creation. "Chaos heard the Word and became order, darkness heard it and became light." God said it, and it was so.

Is it any wonder that some scientists have speculated that the structure of the physical universe may well be the product of sound waves. Hans Jenny, founder of cymatics, argued

that "sound is the creative principle. . . . It must be regarded as primordial."

John Cramer has found evidence for this "sound created during the Big Bang," which he describes as "the low, deep noise emitted as the universe came into being."

Says Cramer, "As the early universe expanded, sound waves propagated through the dense medium that closed back on itself, so that the hypersphere of the universe rang like a bell. . . . In this case, the ringing covered the entire universe."

Indeed, as Scripture declares, the word of creation was not dependent upon the transmission of sound at the speed of sound, for since God is omnipresent, the sound of his Word was also omnipresent. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of his hands . . . their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world."

**Sustained by  
the Voice of God**

The voice of God that created everything in the beginning has not been silent since the dawn of creation. It is still speaking. “[God] is by his nature continuously articulate.

He fills the world with his speaking Voice.” It is not that God sometime in the primordial past spoke everything into existence and has said nothing since.

Because he dwells in the eternal present, God has not just spoken: he is speaking. God continues to speak with the same powerful word of creation that maintains what he has created and preserves the order of his creation.

The God who said, “Let there be light,” continues to say, “Let light be.” If somehow God were to cease his divine summons for light to be, there would immediately be abject darkness that would stretch throughout the universe.

Phil Mason has rightly argued that “the sustaining wave of God’s power is distributed evenly throughout the entire universe! There is nowhere throughout the entire universe that the sound of God’s voice is not continually heard.

These divine sound waves do not need to travel, for God is omnipresent so that the sound of his voice reaches “all spatial locations in the universe simultaneously.” God’s Word is all pervasive, occupying the entirety of the universe. Because God dwells in the eternal present, his Word is also eternally present.

There may even be scien-

tific evidence that confirms this divine truth and its continuing application. “Scientists have discovered a hum that pervades the entire universe. This is the sound generated by black holes which has a pitch of B flat, but is “57 octaves lower than middle-C,” or a “million billion times deeper than the limits of human hearing.” Andrew Fabian says that the “intensity of [this] sound is comparable to human speech.” Perhaps this is physical evidence of the biblical premise that “God is sustaining the universe with his powerful word.”

### **Let Light Be: Forming the Crucible of Life**

The very first spoken words of creative power were expressed in this statement: “Let light be.”

By issuing forth the divine command that caused light to spring into existence, God formed the foundation for all life in the universe. He created the most important factor that would make it possible for him to bring forth life in abundance.

Light is the very core of photosynthesis that produces and sustains all vegetable life. At the same time, light is essential for the existence of all animal life. Indeed, light is life, and life is light.

When Scripture described the light that God had produced on the very first day of his creative impulse, it used the Hebrew phrase *rwOah’-Tae* (et ha-or) to describe that light. This light was a very specific light.

It was highly unique in that it was spoken into existence by divine fiat on creation’s first day, three days before God ordered the creation of the sun, moon, planets, and stars!

The question, therefore, arises, What was the light that existed three days before the sun, moon, and stars? In the process of analyzing the phrase, the Jewish sages discovered that the numerical equivalents of the Hebrew letters in the phrase *et ha-or* total 613, the precise number of commandments that are outlined in the Torah.

Using this analysis, they suggested that the light which pervaded the universe for the first three of creation’s days—before the sun, moon, and stars existed—was the light of the supernal Torah, God’s Word. The eternal Torah is the transcendent light, the Word of God that was spoken in the beginning in order to form the environment in which life itself could be created.

Perhaps this is the reason the apostle John noted that “in [Jesus] was life and the life was the light of all humankind.” Jesus was the embodiment of the Torah, the Word enfleshed.

As the incarnate Word, his life was light—and, indeed, the light of life. This is why Jesus said, “I am the light of the world,” and why he promised that anyone who would follow him would “have the light of life.”

Jesus used the same metaphors that King David had employed when he said, “With you [God] is the fountain of life; in your light

we see light.” The pristine light of the divine presence is the foundation of life and is the continuing sustenance of human existence. When God brings forth life from the dead, he does so with the order of his divine Word, the light of the universe and beyond. The divine light is the crucible of life in the biosphere designed for life in the midst of nonexistence.

### **God Creates “Living Being” Out of Nothing**

After God announced his intention to create humanity, the text says three times in one verse that God created humanity out of nothing. Even the language of the Genesis narratives confirms the special attention that God gave to the final exercise of his creative energy. The word *ar”B’* (*bara*), “create” (by implication “out of nothing”), is used three times in the single verse that describes humanity’s creation. This is a powerful fact because *bara* is used only two other times in the entire first chapter of Genesis.

It is clear, then, that God was intensely focused on the creation of humanity and that this creation would be *sui generis*, not merely another step in the progression of animate life, but something wholly unique. “So God created [*ar”B’*] humanity in his own image; in the image of God he created [*ar”B’*] him; male and female he created [*ar”B’*] them.”

### **Why Human Life?**

The question that comes immediately to mind is,



Why would a God whose being stretches infinitely beyond the ever-expanding finite universe have even remotely considered creating humanity on a mere microdot of utterly insignificant matter floating in the vast expanses of space? What makes such inconsequential beings so important?

There is one consistent theme in Scripture that speaks to the reason why the infinite God decided to create finite human beings in the first place. "God created humanity in his own image, after his likeness . . . male and female created he them." Humanity was divinely designed specifically for the purpose of imaging the heavenly God in the created universe and in the terrestrial world, for mirroring the person of the immaterial God in the material universe, and for revealing the invisible spirit being—God—in visible physical beings—male and female humanity.

No other being or thing was formed with the intention of bearing God's "image and likeness." This is why it was only when he spoke of his intention to create

humanity did God identify himself in "the self-referential first person," thereby, as Randall Garr notes, investing his own personal "identity in this human creature." Out of all the profound and expansive manifestation of God's creative profundity, "only humanity is envisioned as comparable to divinity." Humans alone are theomorphic in that God placed in them his own image. In reality, God is not an anthropomorphic creation of human beings; human beings are a theomorphic creation of God! Humanity, then, was "created out of nothing" when the God of the universe breathed the breath of life into the clay body that he had formed from the dust of the ground.

At that very instant, the human entity became "a living being [soul]," a vivified being that was completely different from everything else that God had created. No other being in the terrestrial creation had ever been called a "living" being. Humanity, therefore, was wholly unique among all of creation. What had been inert, lifeless physical matter instantly became living

tissue when the infinite God breathed his own breath directly into the nostrils of the being that he had formed. If there ever was a life-from-the-dead experience, this was it! In one instant, no human life existed; in another second, life as it had never been before sprang into being: human life, living being.

#### **Gevurot, Miracle of Creation and Re-creation**

If there should ever be a doubt in the mind of anyone that healing, miraculous restoration of health, and ultimately resurrection from the dead are possible, one needs only to review the dynamic truths established in the first three chapters of Holy Scripture. God simply has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate his gevurot in healing and deliverance, and, in the final analysis, he will demonstrate those powers by resurrecting the dead. There is no question about this divine power because it is the same supernatural ability that was so profoundly demonstrated in the creation of life on planet Earth in the first place. "Resurrection . . .

recapitulates but also transcends the creation of humanity. The miracle of the end-time restores the miracle of the beginning."

This is precisely the way in which God works. "In the beginning, God's action, figured in the metaphor of breathing, gives life to creatures who would be lost or nonexistent except for his loving desire to create from nothing or restore from death." At the end of time, God "enlivens those who, without his saving breath, would have lain forever inert."

This will be the final demonstration of the gevurot that were first manifest when God breathed into Adam's nostrils, giving life "to those who had no life, and could have no life, apart from the vitalizing, animating act of a gracious creation." In the resurrection, God will once again demonstrate his gevurot by bringing forth life from the dead for all the righteous.

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# Israel: the Final Chapter

## of the Dynamic Saga

**Written by:**  
**John D. Garr, Ph.D.**

A full account of the final chapter in the life-from-the-dead saga of the Chosen People has yet to be penned; however, there is abundant predictive information in Holy Scripture to indicate how the story will end. It is clear from the prophetic promises which God made to his people Israel that the ultimate chapter of the saga will be fulfilled in three events in which the Lord himself will summon forth life from the dead: 1) the restoration of the people of Israel to their God, 2) the restoration of the people of Israel to their land, and 3) the resurrection of the righteous dead to eternal life.

As a prelude to the final conclusion of their dynamic saga, the Jewish people have been promised that they will experience the universal spiritual renewal that God himself has continually predicted through the prophets. This spiritual restoration of the people of Israel to their God was to be similar to, if not contemporaneous with, the restoration of the people of Israel to their ancient homeland and the restoration of the land of Israel to the people of Israel. Ezekiel specifically connected the return of the people of Israel to their God with their

return to Israel: "Thus says the LORD God. It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name . . .

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean. . . . I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. . . . Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. . . . On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I

will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt."

Hosea predicted the time when these events would occur: "Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God. . . . They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days."

This chapter of the dynamic saga will be the ultimate vindication of both YHWH, the God of the Jews, and his Chosen People. First, God himself will be vindicated, as he said through the prophet Ezekiel, "The

nations will know that I am the LORD,' declares the LORD God, 'when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.'" Then, the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews who have been mocked, despised, exiled, persecuted, and murdered for centuries will be vindicated for their faith in God.

After millennia of sorrow, pain, and agony, they will experience the blessing of God's promise to Zephaniah: "Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your punishment. . . . The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. . . . At that time I will gather you, at that time I will bring you home.

I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes,' says the LORD."

Isaiah also prophesied about the corporate spiritual renewal of the Israelite people: "Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation." The prophet then further declared that in the unfolding of this redemption, the Lord would endow Israel with his Spirit so that his words would not depart from their mouths "forever."

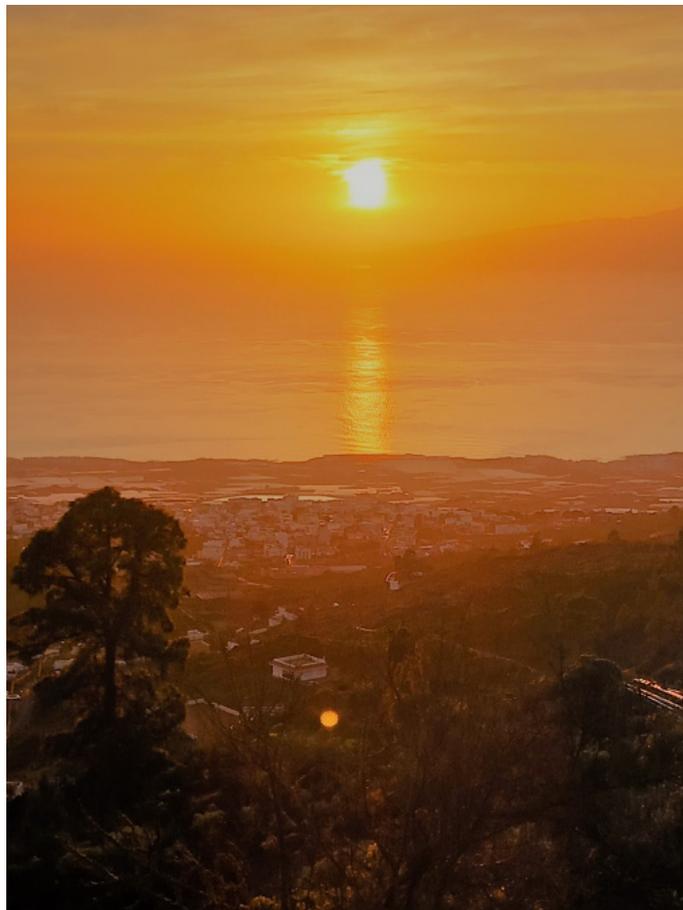


Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

The apostle Paul alluded to this very same prophetic promise when he declared unequivocally that “all Israel will be saved.” Then the apostle quoted directly from Isaiah’s further prediction that “the Redeemer will come to Zion and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” saying that his vision of the salvation of “all Israel” would occur when “the deliverer will come from Zion and banish ungodliness from Jacob.”

For Paul, then, the spiritual restoration of all Israel was to be of the same nature as both the restoration of the nation of Israel and the resurrection at the end of the age, for he described that renewal in these terms: “What will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”

From the context of Scripture, therefore, three “life-from-the-dead” experiences have been promised to Israel and the Jewish people: 1) when the people of Israel have been spiritually restored to their God, it will be “life from the dead”; 2) when the nation and land of Israel has been fully restored to the Jewish people, it will be “life from the dead”; and 3) when the resurrection of all the righteous dead occurs at the end of the age, it will be “life from the dead.”

These life-from-the-dead experiences will fully confirm and validate, if not vindicate, the prophetic praise that erupted from the lips of the temple priest Zechariah, the father of John the Baptizer, who, when he was “filled with the Holy Spi-

rit and prophesied,” made this profound declaration: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited us and accomplished redemption for his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David his servant—as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old—Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to Abraham our father, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”

Following the spiritual resurrection of all Israel, what Hosea called the “last days” and what Daniel called “the end” will come, the time when the universal kingdom God, the reign of peace and justice, will be established over all the earth.

This eventuality will be initiated by the promised act of God that has always been the overarching theme of biblical eschatology: the long-anticipated resurrection of the dead wherein all believers in the God of Israel, both the living and the dead, will experience a corporeal change from mortality into immortality.

The prophet Daniel described this event in this manner: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake . . . Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed

until the time of the end. . . You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.” Isaiah expressed it this way: “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.”

Hosea portrayed it this manner: “I will deliver this people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?”

Paul summed it up this way: “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep [in death], but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

Then the apostle concluded by quoting the words of Hosea: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” and then exulting, “Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The very last chapter in the saga of the Chosen People, then, speaks entirely of life from the dead in the resurrection—the dynamic physical and spiritual change wherein both the living and the dead will inherit eternal life in the everlasting kingdom of YHWH and his Messiah.

## **An Enduring Foundational Expectation**

Since before the first century, biblical Judaism has maintained as one of its most fundamental tenets the expectation that the righteous dead will be resurrected at the end of the age.

Indeed, there are hints throughout the Hebrew Scriptures that resurrection of the righteous was inevitable. Those allusions were made very explicit in Daniel’s recapitulation of the resurrection expectation.

Finally, during the centuries before and after the advent of the Common Era, fierce debates arose in the Jewish community about the prospects for a resurrection. The Sadducees were famous for their utter denial of any possibility of resurrection.

They were entirely this-worldly in their worldview and mindset. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were adamant in their understanding that all biblical faith pointed to an ultimate teleological end—a goal that would be fulfilled in the dramatic resurrection of all the righteous dead from the dust of the earth so that they might live forever in the presence of God.

This represented the ultimate imposition of divine justice upon the earth wherein the righteous would be rewarded for their faithfulness to God and the unrighteous would be judged for their infidelity.

The issue of resurrection became a true matter of life and death for the Pharisees, even an issue that determined one's share in the Olam ha-Ba, the World to Come. Very early on, the sages had come to believe that all Jews would have a portion in the World to Come.

To establish a foundation for their assertion, they appealed this promise that God had made to Isaiah: "Your people, all of them righteous, shall possess the land for all time."

Then, they also interpreted Isaiah's declaration as evidence that the righteous Israelites who would "possess the land [of Israel] for all time" would have to do so in the resurrection at the end of time (since the Israelites physically had endured the Babylonian exile from the land and, therefore, had not possessed it for all time).

For these sages, there were only three exceptions to this promise of universal resurrection for all Jews: "These are the ones who do not have a share in the World-to-Come: He who says that the resurrection of the dead is not in the Torah, and the Torah is not from Heaven; and an Epicurean."

For the Pharisees, therefore, belief that the resurrection of the dead was taught

in the Torah was essential if one was to be included in the resurrection at the end of time.

Establishing the teaching of the resurrection in the Torah was a very sensitive matter. Using sometimes intriguing exegetical techniques, the Pharisean sages went to great lengths to "prove" that the theme of the resurrection had been established in the Torah.

A prime example was that of Rabbi Judah, the editor of the Mishnah, who read Exodus 15:1, "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD," from the original Hebrew this way: "Then Moses and the Israelites will sing this song to the LORD." Judah concluded from the actual verb tense in the text that the Song by the Sea would have to be sung in the resurrection.

Another of the sages, Rabbi Simai, maintained that "if it would be possible to interpret every single letter in the Torah, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead could be found there."

He then argued that the text of Exodus 6:4, "I also established my covenant with [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob], to give them the land of Canaan" (emphasis added), did not say, "to give you the land," and, therefore, had to apply specifically to the patriarchs and not

just to their descendants. Since neither Abraham, Isaac, nor Jacob ever inherited the land of Canaan, the only way in which God's covenant promise could be personally fulfilled in the lives of those patriarchs would be for them to be resurrected bodily from the dead.

Rabbi Gamaliel went even further by advancing the argument that the resurrection was proven in each part of the Tanakh, from the Torah, from the Nevi'im, and from the Ketuvim.

He replied to the charge that the resurrection was not specifically mentioned in the Torah by saying, "And the LORD said to Moses: Behold, you shall rest with your fathers and rise up." Then he argued that the resurrection was spoken of in the Nevi'im, which says, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that live in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Finally, he maintained that the resurrection was confirmed in the Ketuvim, which says, "And the roof of thy mouth, like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those who are asleep to speak."

It should have come as no

surprise, then, that the earliest Jewish disciples of Jesus would have been strong believers in the resurrection. Jesus himself constantly sided with the Pharisees against the Sadducees on the issue of resurrection.

When he addressed their questions about the resurrection, he often said, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God."

Jesus maintained that because the Lord said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," God is the God of resurrection. God did not say, "I was the God of Abraham"; he said, "I am the God of Abraham."

Since God is not the God of the dead, Jesus said, he must be the God of resurrection who will bring the patriarchs forth from the dead so that he will be their God in the future as well as in the past. Jesus and Rabbi Simai agreed that the only way that God could fulfill Exodus 3:6 was by resurrecting the patriarchs.

As Kevin Madigan notes, "Jesus' belief in the resurrection to come, then, is grounded theologically in faith in the God of creation to bring life out of death, in the power of God as the creator of the cosmos."

Jesus, however, took the resurrection one step furt-



Photo: Jasmina Nurmesniemi



A moment in prayer on top of an old tank in Golan Heights, Israel.  
Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

her. In his conversation with Martha after the death of his friend Lazarus, he said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even if he dies," and he continued by saying, "Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

In effect, Jesus promised that those who believed that he was the Messiah and Savior would never really die because, for them, their physical death would only be a simple transition into eternal life in the resurrection at the end of the age. In the meantime, they would merely "sleep" in Jesus.

The apostles of Jesus made the resurrection theme a central device in their proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God. Their specific "emphasis was on the resurrection from the dead to which Jesus' own resurrection gave witness."

Paul especially was adamant about the importance of the resurrection: "If

the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised . . . and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless." Christian faith, therefore, is meaningless without the resurrection, for while the Christian believer is saved from his sins by the crucifixion of Christ, the only way in which he can be justified is by the resurrection of the Messiah.

Indeed, it is "by only the resurrection of Jesus from the dead" that Christians are "begotten again unto the hope of life."

Christianity, therefore, has no basis for existence without the historical event of the bodily resurrection of Jesus and without the future event of the general bodily resurrection of the righteous dead. Christianity is a resurrection religion which owes the core of its identity to the Jewish concept of the resurrection of the dead.

Both traditional Jews and Christians have consistently understood that the resurrection is bodily and not

merely a spiritual exercise. Though some elements in both faiths have tried to syncretize biblical resurrection theology with the Greek idea of immortality of the soul or with the view that resurrection is symbolic of living a good life so that one lives on in the memory of others, the truth is that resurrection is bodily.

While some scholars have occupied themselves with trying to figure out how God could possibly reassemble the scattered atoms or DNA of disintegrated human bodies, like those whose flesh has been consumed by fish and plankton or those who have been vaporized by the explosive devices of modern warfare, the truth is that the resurrected body will not simply be the reconstituted body of present human existence.

The resurrected life will be far more than mere resuscitated human life as it is presently known. In fact, there is significant evidence in Scripture to support

the view that the "spiritual body," which Paul believed would be similar to, if not the same as, the glorified body in which Jesus was resurrected, will be a body that will be "from heaven," not from the earth.

### Eternal Life

Resurrection in both the Hebrew and Apostolic Scriptures is resurrection to "eternal life." Daniel was the first to use the term eternal life in Scripture; however, his use of the phrase certainly summed up all the expectations of the prophets and sages of Israel, as well as those of the apostles of Jesus.

This eternal life, however, is not a purely spiritual existence, the survival of human consciousness, or a perpetuation of the immortal soul. Job said, "In my flesh I will see God."

Physical embodiment is inherent in resurrection. It would be a mistake, however, "to imagine that the 'eternal life' that the

deserving receive is simply a restoration of their old quotidian reality, only without the pain and injustice.” For the resurrected, the body will be different “from the kind they knew in their mortal life, for now they have become immune to death and the bodily infirmities associated with it. . . . Their new life is thus not a mere continuation of the old but rather a radical transformation of it.”

Resurrection life will be a new form of existence that humanity has never experienced before except in the resurrection of Jesus himself.

Paul made this truth very clear: “We know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling . . . so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”

The resurrection body, then, will have no direct connection with the mortal body in which life was lived on earth. The resurrection body will not be the old mortal body reassembled, reconstituted, and revitalized so that it can then live forever in the same state in which it had previously lived.

This would not be the kind of eternal life that Scripture envisions. Instead, eternal life will be lived in a spiritual body that will clothe the revived human spirit in a totally new physical reality which will reconstitute “living being” in a new and

better form. This time, in contrast with the human body that was received in the Genesis creation, the new spiritual body will be imbued with eternal life from the moment of resurrection for in the act of being raised from the dead, it will have partaken of the fruit of the Tree of Life that Adam and Eve never tasted.

It is clear, then, that, over the centuries, Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity have stood alongside one another in one powerful witness: the undeniable belief in the eschatological resurrection of the righteous dead.

From their first-century emergence from Second Temple Judaism, both sibling faiths have striven “to uphold faith in a God who transcends nature and can overcome it, even bringing back the whole person, body and soul, as God who acts in history, fulfilling his amazing promises to his people.”

And, by the grace of God, both religions still believe in and await the advent of the last day when those who sleep in the dust of the earth will hear the sound of the shofar and the voice of God and will come forth in the resurrection.

### **Restoration at the End: A Recapitulation of the Beginning**

If one is hoping to understand the end, the best place to look is in the beginning.

This is what God specifically said to Isaiah, “Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and the-

re is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning . . . saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all my good pleasure.’”

God’s final action toward humankind is wrapped up in his first action toward humanity.

The same God who, in the beginning, gathered together the dust of the earth, formed it into a human body, and then breathed his breath into that body so that it became a living being will, in the end, resurrect the righteous dead in a far better state than his original creation and imbue them with eternal life.

Levenson gives a powerful description of this action: “Like creation, resurrection is a preeminently supernatural act, a miraculous reversal of the course of nature. Through it, God thus transforms death, nature’s last word, into a prelude to his own new act of creation, the re-creation of human beings in a form that is bodily yet immune to the vulnerabilities and ravages of biological life.

So conceived, resurrection thus recapitulates but also transcends the creation of humanity. The miracle of the end-time restores the miracle of the beginning.”

Just as God created human life in the beginning out of nothing when he breathed his neshamah into humanity, depositing there the nishmat chayyim (“breath of life”), so will he deposit eternal life into resurrected bodies in the end.

This is what Tertullian

taught so eloquently: “If God produced all things whatever out of nothing, He will be able to . . . call forth the flesh too from . . . whatever abyss it may have been engulfed. And surely He is most competent to re-create who created, inasmuch as it is a far greater work to have produced than to have reproduced. . . . On this principle, you may be quite sure that the restoration of the flesh is easier than its first formation.” Irenaeus also drew a similar conclusion: “Surely it is much more difficult . . . to make man an animated and rational creature, than to reintegrate again that which had been created and then afterwards decomposed into earth.”

The end is perfectly revealed from the beginning. In the beginning, God created life in a universe where there was no life. In the end, he will create life again, this time out of death, when “he enlivens those who, without his saving breath, would have lain forever inert.”

Levenson describes how this eschatological work of God recapitulates the beginning work of God: “[T]he God who created will also re-create, and the miraculous potentials he activated at the beginning will again be seen at the end, when he restores the flesh-and-blood people Israel to their land and station, renders justice to Jew and Gentile alike, reverses the very real tragedy of death, and ushers in a better world without it.”

Resurrection, therefore, is the eschatological unit, the



Time to listen and pray. Golan Heights. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

event that will occur at the end point of history which will “transform and redeem history” and will “open onto a barely imaginable world beyond anything that preceded it.”

### “I Know That My Redeemer Lives!”

The ancient patriarch Job experienced in his own personal life what was to be a foretaste of the continuing dynamic saga of the Chosen People.

Through no fault of his own, Job had endured excruciating suffering. Death was all around him. He himself was as good as dead. Finally, the patriarch’s faith in God’s faithfulness swelled up in his heart, prompting him to conclude: “Though God slay me, yet will I trust him.”

In faith, he spoke words to God that paralleled both the Genesis creation narrative and Ezekiel’s dry-

bones vision: “Did you not . . . clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews?” No doubt, the patriarch was expecting restoration and renewal from the God who had created him in the first place.

Finally, he declared his faith in extremis when he made this exclamation: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last, he will take his stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh, I shall see God . . . whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another.”

Job may have been speaking of his expectation that God would deliver him from his then current malady so that, despite his descent into virtual death, he would yet “see the LORD’s goodness in the land of the living.”

On the other hand, his declaration may have expres-

sed his personal expectation that he would be raised from the dead in the resurrection of the righteous at the end of time.

Whatever the case may have been, the patriarch was expressing his absolute confidence that he would be restored to health and that he would live again. Job knew that when his Redeemer would “stand at the latter day upon the earth,” he would personally see his God and that he would do so, as he said, “in my flesh.” Job had experienced death in life, now he was absolutely certain that he would experience life from death.

The immortal words of undying faith that Job spoke, “I know that my Redeemer lives!” have echoed in the heart’s cry of millions of Jews and Christians whose faith in the living God has known no bounds, even transcending life itself.

The Redeemer whom Job

knew and trusted is the God of Israel, the one who is able to “emancipate by bringing all the shadows of human existence into their fullest light,” says Marvin Wilson.

He is, indeed, everything that the word redeemer implies in the Hebrew text. God himself is the *laeGO* (*Go’el*), the ultimate “kinsman-redeemer,” the one who “pays the price and exerts the effort to make others all that they can be.” Just as Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer who brought Ruth, the Gentile convert to the Jewish faith, into abundant and joyful life, so the great and mighty *Go’el*, the Redeemer of Israel, will champion the cause of all his Chosen People—including all the Gentiles who have put their faith in him—and he will redeem them unto everlasting life. The hope of life from the dead for both Jew and Gentile, then, rests eternally, as it has always done, in

one source and one source only: the Redeemer of Israel, the one and only God who has the gevurot of death and life.

The most fundamental expression of faith for all believers is the attestation of the Shema which says that YHWH is God alone. Those who affirm this truth must also believe that the one God “is a rewarder of those who seek him.” The God of Israel is, indeed, the rewarder, the emancipator of his people, the one who will “avenge” them against their adversary by freeing them from mortality and bringing them to the abundant life of the Olam ha-Ba.

In so doing, he will vindicate both their faith in his promise of eternal life and their faithfulness to the truth of his Word by triumphing over death itself. For the believer, death is simply not the end, because the Go’el of Israel has the

final word, and his word is: “Life from the dead.”

The Word of Israel’s God has given all the believers of history the same calm assurance that Job expressed when he avowed, “In my flesh I will see God.”

They have been confident that they will also share in this promise that God gave to the prophet Daniel: “You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

At the sound of the last great shofar that signals the end of the age, the Go’el of Israel will once and for all prove both his gevurot and his eternal faithfulness to the righteous who sleep in the dust of the earth by redeeming them unto eternal life through the resurrection of the dead.

This is the eternal message of the Gevurot in the Amidah. “[T]he atemporal lan-

guage of the benediction . . . affirms that God’s deliverance may occasionally be witnessed in the present dispensation but will become fully manifest and unassailable only at or after the messianic consummation,” says Jon Levenson.

The final word, therefore, “is a good thing, in this case God’s miraculous intervention into history to grant the dead of all generations new life as he finally secures his triumph over evil and suffering and establishes on earth the kingdom over which he already reigns in the higher realm.”

This is the kingdom of which Daniel spoke: “Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; his kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and

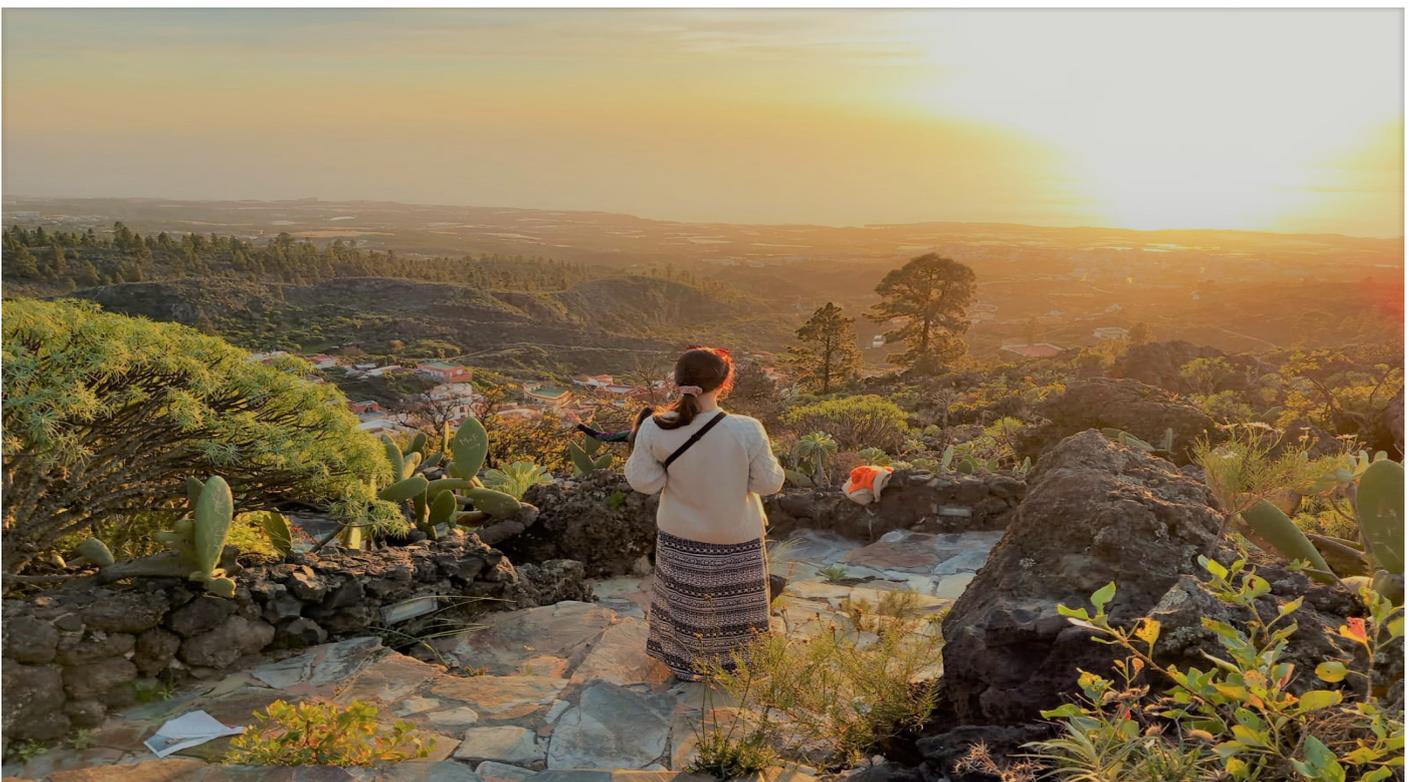
obey him.”

Without a doubt, the God of Israel is possessed of gevurot, the powers of death and life, and he will always bring forth his Chosen People into life whether it be through the orchestration of world events, through the healing of sicknesses and diseases, through the miraculous deliverance from terminal illness, or, in the end, through the resurrection from the dead.

Ultimately and once and for all, the God of Israel will prove his faithfulness to all generations of faithful Jews and Christians, even to those who sleep in the dust of the earth, by bestowing upon them life from the dead.

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Sundown in Tenerife. Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi

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”...that all of them may be one (echad)...” John 17:21

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