

## SECTION IV. THE PLACE OF THE DEAD

Writing is the use of symbols to convey the thoughts of the writer to the mind of the reader. To do so both the writer and the reader must understand the words in the same manner in their context. Translations are intended to reproduce the ideas of one language in the minds of those who read in another. The Bibles we read are translations from the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages, in which the text was originally recorded.

Since God wanted His meaning understood He used language familiar to the reader. Therefore, in order to know that we understand what God intended it is vital to know what concepts those words would produce in the mind of the average reader in those languages.

We can learn this in at least four ways:

1. We can see how these words were used by the people in daily communication.
  - a. From the classical and common writings unrelated to Biblical influence.
  - b. From the early rabbinical and other religious writings.
    - 1) Apocryphal writings. (Those generally recognized as uninspired in Protestant and Jewish Bibles)
    - 2) Pseudepigraphal writings. (Those generally recognized as falsely claimed to be inspired.)
    - 3) Talmudic and traditional writings of the Jews, mostly between the Old and New Testaments.
    - 4) The Dead Sea Scrolls
  - c. From early Christian writings.
2. We may examine how these words were translated into other languages by non-inspired sources. The Septuagint translation of the Hebrew into Greek is especially valuable for this purpose since people in the first century were influenced by its usage, early inspired writers quoted from it and the New Testament was first fully recorded in Greek for those who were reading it.
3. We may consider the philological (language) growth and relationship of words in their various related forms. Words commonly have a principal idea that runs through all of their forms. If that root meaning shows up in the other forms it favors the conclusion that it exists in a disputed case. For example, the word, “dog” is used in, “dogged,” “dogging,” etc.
4. We may examine the particular contexts in which the word is found in our Bible.
  - a. If it is a word translated elsewhere from the Old Testament, how was the original generally used?
  - b. If this passage is translated from the Old, how was it there used?
  - c. How the word is used by others than the writer.
  - d. How the word is used by the writer in other writings.

- e. How the word is used by the writer in the immediate book.
- f. How the word is used in the immediate context.
- g. How the word is used if repeated more than once in the sentence.

## I. HEBREW AND GREEK WORDS FOR THE GRAVE --THE PLACE OF THE BODY AT DEATH

Properly speaking, “Sheol” in Hebrew, and “Hades” in Greek usage, indicate the place where souls go at death. This is not necessarily the place of the body. There are other words that more correctly refer to the grave.

### A. Hebrew words for grave or sepulcher

**kevurah** #6900 (14 Times)

- Gen. 35:20 “*Jacob set a pillar upon her GRAVE*”
- I Sam. 10:2 “*Rachel’s SEPULCHER*”

**kever** #6913 (71 Times)

- Num. 19:16 “*Whosoever toucheth...a GRAVE shall...*”
- Judg. 8:32 “*Gideon...was buried in the SEPULCHER*”

### B. Greek words for grave or sepulcher

“**taphos**” #5028 (7 times)

- Mat. 23:27. “*ye are like unto whited SEPULCHERS*”
- Mat. 23:29. “*ye build the TOMBS of the prophets*”
- Mat. 27:61. “*sitting over against the SEPULCHER*”
- Mat. 27:64. “*that the SEPULCHER be made sure*”
- Mat. 27:66. “*went, and made the SEPULCHER sure*”
- Mat. 28:1. “*... and the other Mary to see the SEPULCHER*”

“**mneema**” #3418 (7 times)

- Mark 5:5. “*and in the TOMBS, crying, and*”
- Luke 8:27. “*abode in (any) house, but in the TOMBS*”
- Luke 23:53. “*laid it in a SEPULCHER that was hewn*”
- Luke 24:1. “*they came unto the SEPULCHER*”
- Acts 2:29. “*his SEPULCHER is with us*”
- Acts 7:16. “*laid in the SEPULCHER that Abraham*”
- Rev. 11:9. “*their dead bodies to be put in GRAVES.*”

“**mneemeion**” #3419 (42 times)

- John 5:28. “*...all that are in the GRAVES shall come forth*”
- Mat. 27:52. “*...and the GRAVES were opened and...and many bodies of the saints...were raised*”
- Mat. 27:53. “*...and came out of the GRAVES*”

- Mat. 27:59,60. "...the body...and laid it in his own new tomb, which had been hewn in the rock"
- Luke 11:44. "...for ye are as GRAVES which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them"
- Luke 11:47,48. "...for ye build the SEPULCHERS"
- John 12:17. Lazarus came bodily out of the GRAVE (not Hades)

It is a gross distortion to contend, as does the Watchtower, that the "graves" from which the dead come forth is the memory of God.

## II. HEBREW AND GREEK WORDS FOR THE PLACE OF THE SOUL OR SPIRIT AT DEATH

### A. "HADES" (Greek #86 --11 times)

Strong defines it, "86, Hadees properly 'unseen', that is, 'Hades' or the place (state) of departed souls"

"Hades," in Greek usage, was the place to which souls go after departing from the body at death. It was understood as an underworld area. Far below Hades was an area known as "Tartarus" where the most wicked sinners were kept in continual torment.

### NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO HADES INDICATE A SIMILAR CONCEPT.

- Mat. 11:23. "*Capernaum...shalt go down into HADES*"
- Luke. 16:18. "*...the gates of HADES shall not prevail against it.*"
- Luke 10:15. "*...Capernaum...shalt be thrust down to HADES.*"
- Luke 16:23. "*...and in HADES he lifted up his eyes, being in torments*"
- I Co.15:55. "*O death, where is thy sting? O HADES where is thy victory?*"
- Rev. 1:18. "*...have the keys of HADES and of death*"
- Rev. 6:8. "*...his name was Death, and HADES followed*"
- Rev. 20:13. "*Death and HADES delivered up the dead in them*"
- Rev. 20:14. "*Death and HADES were cast into the lake of fire*"
- Acts 2:27. "*...thou wilt not leave my soul in HADES, neither will thy holy one see corruption.*"
- Acts 2:31. "*...his soul was not left IN HADES, neither did his flesh see corruption*"

Note the distinction between soul and flesh. Jesus was dead BEFORE his body was put into the grave. According to annihilationists the soul ceases to exist at death. How then could his soul have been in the grave?

Note that Acts 2:31 is a quotation from Psalms 16:9, "Hades," is a translation of the Hebrew word, "Sheol," not the usual Hebrew words for the place of a body (see above). In the pre-Christian Septuagint translation from Hebrew to Greek, "Hades" was used to for the Hebrew word, "Sheol," as the place where souls go at death.

Note that not one of the above New Testament passages indicates the place of the body.

## B. “SHEOL” (Hebrew) #7585 (65 times)

Strong says, “Sheol from 7592; *Sheol* or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean *retreat*), including its accessories and inmates”

It’s relation to #7592, “to ask,” reveals that it is the place of the unknown or hidden.

Keep in mind that under the Old Testament they did not have as clear a picture of things as under the New. The light was dim concerning what was beyond death. (II Cor.3:10-18; Col.1:26; John 1:4,9) In spite of that there is sufficient evidence to show that man had a soul that went to another place than the grave.

### 1. SCRIPTURES THAT SHOW SHEOL DID NOT MEAN THE GRAVE

-Gen. 37:33,35. Jacob said he was going down into Sheol unto his son. He obviously did not mean the grave. He believed Joseph had been eaten by a lion. (Gen. 37:33)

-I Sam.28:19. Saul was told by Samuel (who was dead), “*tomorrow you and your sons will be with me.*” Since Saul was not buried for several days (I Sam.31:6, 8-13), it is obvious he was not saying he would that day be in the grave.

-Ps. 16:10. “*Thou will not leave my soul in SHEOL*” (see Acts 2 above)

-Ps. 116:3. “*The pains of SHEOL gat hold upon me*”

-Ps. 139:8. “*If I make my bed in SHEOL, thou art there.*”  
(Note: If he did not exist in death, how could God be in the grave with him?)

-Isa. 14:9-14. “*SHEOL from beneath is moved for you...they shall say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we?*”

-Ezek. 31:14-17. “*I cast him down to SHEOL with them that descend into the pit... comforted in the nether parts of the earth.*”

-Ezek. 32:18, 21. The multitude of Egypt would be cast down “*unto the nether parts of the earth with them that go down into the pit... The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of SHEOL with them that help him...*”

-Jonah 2:2. “*Out of the belly of SHEOL I cried*”  
(Note: Obviously this is not the grave. He was in a conscious state)

-Deut. 32:22. The fire of God's anger burns in "*lowest SHEOL.*"  
This does not sound like the grave. It is a deeper place in Sheol showing different levels corresponding to Tartarus in the Greek. What effect is a fire to that which does not exist?

-Ps. 86:13. David says his soul was delivered from "*lowest SHEOL.*" This gives a picture of different levels and corresponds to the Greek, (Tartarus). If the soul ceases to exist at death, how could it be in the grave, much less "*lowest SHEOL*"?

-Ps. 30:3. "...*brought up my soul from SHEOL*"  
(Note, the soul, not the body. If the soul only exists when the body is alive then how could his soul be in SHEOL?)

"Sheol" is only four times ever translated into the Septuagint by anything other than "Hades." Indeed, it may be that the Hebrew texts used in translation were different than the present. In none of those cases are the Greek words "grave" or "sepulcher," the place of the body.

-II Sam. 22:6. "*The sorrows of SHEOL compassed me.*"  
There is sorrow in sheol.

Translated by "thanatos" = "death"

-Job 24:19. (Completely different text)

-Prov. 23:14 "Thou shalt deliver his soul from SHEOL"

This is probably an elipsis meaning that he would be delivered from going to sheol. In any case, if the soul ceases to exist at death it would not go to the grave.

Translated by "thanatos" = "death"

-Ezek. 32:21 (Completely different text)

## **1. SCRIPTURES SOMETIMES USED TO SHOW SHEOL IS THE GRAVE**

Sheol seems a little broader than Hades in its usage but there is no conclusive indication it is the place of the body.

-Num.16:30, 33. The earth opened and they went down alive into Sheol. The earth opened for their bodies and they were swallowed alive –they went into the unseen place. Since Sheol is pictured as being beneath the earth, this may refer to the soul.

-Ps. 49:14. Like sheep they are laid in Sheol. Newer translations say they are "appointed for Sheol"

-Ps. 141:8. Bones are scattered by the plow at the mouth of Sheol. This clearly shows that the grave (place of bones) is only considered to be the "mouth of Sheol"

-Ezek. 32:27. They went down into Sheol with their weapons.

Again, this may simply be elliptical. The body went into the grave while the soul went to Sheol. It is the type of speech any one might use where part of the effect is placed for the whole.

-Amos 9:2. *“Though they dig into sheol...though they climb up to heaven”*

This does not say that they actually could dig into sheol. Rather, it is presented as something as unreasonable as that they could climb into heaven. This does not represent Sheol as being any mere grave.

-Jonah 2:2. Jonah speaks of crying *out of the belly of Sheol*.

This figuratively speaking. It is certainly is not the grave. He sees himself facing immanent death and his soul therefore going to the abode of the dead. For those who insist this is the grave, note that Jonah is alive and speaking.

### C. “TARTARUS”

In Greek usage, the place of torment of the wicked dead was Tartarus, a gloomy area in lower Hades. Only once is it used in the New Testament (in the verb form, tartaro (#5021 “hell” in A.V.; See Thayer’s Lexicon p.615.)

-II Pet.2:4. *“God spared not the angels that sinned but cast them down to Tartarus, and committed them to pits [or, “chains”] of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment”*

#### OTHER RELATED TEXTS

-Jude 6. *“...and angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”*

-I Pet.3:18-20. *“...but made alive in the spirit in which he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah...”*

-Luke 8:28-30. These demons were afraid of being sent into the abyss and *tormented* before their time. (Matt. 8:29; Mark 5:7)

-Rev. 20:1-3,7. The devil will be chained and cast into the abyss. After a thousand years he is released from “prison.” Clearly, this is not annihilation.

The area of Hades for the righteous was a pleasant garden, pictured in rabbinical literature as *“in the bosom”* of Abraham. In the New Testament it is sometimes called, *“paradise,”* a garden, here pictured as the place where Lazarus is comforted by Abraham.

At the time the King James Version was translated the English word, “hell” meant the unseen place where souls went at death. Therefore, both Sheol and Hades were often translated as “hell.” Since an English word for the concept of a final place of torment of the wicked after the judgment was lacking, translators also used “hell” for other words such as “Tartarus” and “Gehenna” which likewise indicated places beyond death.

In time, the association with torment in fire conveyed in these passages was so strong that this became the common understanding of the word. With this change, “grave,” in the generic sense, is now sometimes used to describe death in general. To convey the proper idea, translators have mostly turned to leaving Sheol, Hades, and Tartarus, un-translated, while the word, “hell,” commonly understood to be a place of fiery torment, is used to translate, “Gehenna.”