

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [200]

If I arise, I will kick you that I will straighten out your hump!

Insights into Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 91a



Background to Our Story

Geviha ben Pesisa

According to the Talmud, Geviha lived during the reign of Alexander the Great (fourth century B.C.E.). Alexander's vast empire extended from Greece down through Egypt and eastward through Persia.

Resurrection



<http://judaism.about.com/od/judaismbasics/a/Resurrection.htm>

By Ariela Pelaia

By the first century B.C.E. the belief in postmortem resurrection was an important part of Rabbinic Judaism. The ancient rabbis believed that at the end-of-days the dead would be brought back to life, a view that some Jews still hold today.

Though resurrection has played an important role in Jewish eschatology, as with [Olam Ha Ba](#), [Gehenna](#) and [Gan Eden](#), Judaism does not have a definitive answer to the question of what happens after we die.

Resurrection in the Torah

In traditional Jewish thought, resurrection is when God brings the dead back to life. Resurrection occurs three times in the [Torah](#):

In 1 Kings 17:17-24 the prophet Elijah asks God to resurrect the recently deceased son of the widow with whom he is staying. "[Elijah] said to her, 'Give me your son.' Then he...called to the Lord and said, 'O Lord my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?' Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the Lord and said, 'O Lord my God, I pray You, let this child's life return to him.' The Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived."

Instances of resurrection are likewise recorded in 2 Kings 4:32-37 and 2 Kings 13:21. In the first case the prophet Elisha asks God to revive a young boy. In the second case a man is resurrected when his body is cast into Elisha's grave and touches the prophet's bones.

Rabbinic Proofs for Resurrection

There are numerous texts that record rabbinic discussions about resurrection. For instance, in the Talmud a rabbi will be asked where the doctrine of resurrection comes from and will answer the question by citing supporting texts from the [Torah](#).

Sanhedrin 90b and 91b provide an example of this formula. When Rabbi Gamliel was asked how he knew God would resurrect the dead he replied:

"From the Torah: for it is written: 'And the Lord said to Moses, Behold you shall sleep with your fathers; and this people will rise up' [Deuteronomy 31:16]. From the Prophets: as it is written: 'Your dead men shall live, together with my dead bodies shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust; for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out its dead.' [Isaiah 26:19]; from the Writings: as it is written, 'And the roof of your mouth, like the best wine of my beloved, like the best wine, that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of those who are asleep to speak' [Song of Songs 7:9]." (Sanhedrin 90b)

Rabbi Meir also answered this question in Sanhedrin 91b, saying: "As it is said: 'Then will [Moses](#) and the children of Israel sing this song unto the Lord' [Exodus 15:1]. It is not said 'sang' but 'will sing'; hence the Resurrection is deducible from the Torah."

Who Will Be Resurrected?

In addition to discussing proofs for the doctrine of resurrection, the [rabbis](#) also debated the question of who would be resurrected at the end of days. Some rabbis maintained that only the righteous would be resurrected. "Resurrection is for the righteous and not the wicked," says Taanit 7a. Others taught that everyone – Jews and non-Jews, righteous and wicked – would live again.

In addition to these two opinions, there was the idea that only those who died in the Land of Israel would be resurrected. This concept proved problematic as Jews emigrated outside Israel and an increasing number of them consequently died in other parts of the world. Did this mean that even righteous Jews would not be resurrected if they died outside of Israel? In response to this question it became customary to bury a person in the land where they died, but to then rebury the bones in Israel once the body had decomposed.

Another response taught that God would transport the dead to Israel so they could be resurrected in the Holy Land. "God will make underground passages for the righteous who, rolling through them...will get to the Land of Israel, and when they get to the Land of Israel, God will restore their breath to them," says Pesikta Rabbati 1:6. This concept of the righteous dead rolling underground to the Land of Israel is called "gilgul neshamot," which means "cycle of souls" in Hebrew.

Sources:

- "Jewish Views of the Afterlife" by Simcha Raphael. Jason Aronson, Inc: Northvale, 1996.
- "The Jewish Book of Why" by Alfred J. Kolatch. Jonathan David Publishers Inc.: Middle Village, 1981.

Heresy in Judaism (Minim)



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heresy_in_Judaism

Jewish heretics (*minim*, from *minuth* Hebrew for "heretic") are Jewish individuals (often historically, philosophers) whose works have, in part or in whole, been condemned as heretical by significant persons or groups in the larger Jewish community based on the classical teachings of Judaism and derived from *halakha* (Jewish religious law).

The specific rabbinical term for heresies, or religious divisions due to an unlawful spirit, is "minim" (lit. "kinds [of belief]"; the singular "min."

Besides the term "min" (מין) for "heretic," the Talmud uses the words "ḥizonim" (outsiders), "apikoros," and "kofer ba-Torah" (R. H. 17a), or "kofer ba-ikkar" (he who denies the fundamentals of faith; Pes. xxiv. 168b); also "poresh mi-darke tzibbur" (he who deviates from the customs of the community; Tosef., Sanh. xiii. 5; R. H. 17a). Of all these it is said that they are consigned to Gehinnom for all eternity (Tosef., Sanh. l.c.; comp. ib. xii. 9, apparently belonging to xiii. 5: "He who casts off the yoke [of the Law], and he who severs the Abrahamic covenant; he who interprets the Torah against the halakic tradition, and he who pronounces in full the Ineffable Name—all these have no share in the world to come").

The Mishnah (Sanh. x. 1) says the following have no share in the world to come: "He who denies that the Torah is divinely revealed [lit. "comes from Heaven"], and the apikoros." R. Akiba says, "also he who reads heretical books" ("sefarim ḥizonim"). This is explained in the Talmud (Sanh. 100b) to mean "sifre zedukim" (Sadducean writings); but this is an alteration by the censor of "sifre ha-Minim" (books of the Gnostics or Heretics). The Biblical version, "That ye seek not after your own heart" (Numbers 15:39), is explained (Sifre, Num. 115; Ber. 12b) as "Ye shall not turn to heretic views ["minut"] which lead your heart away from God" (see Maimonides, *Yad*, Akkum, ii. 3). In summarizing the Talmudic statements concerning heretics in Sanh. 90-103, Maimonides (*Yad*, Teshubah, iii. 6-8) says:

Hilchot Teshuva Chapter 3 Halacha 7

Five people who can be classified as heretics (Hebrew "minim"):

- One who denies the existence of God or the ruler of the world
- One who says there are two or more rulers of the world
- One who accepts there is one Master of the world but maintains He has a body or a form
- One who denies that He is the sole First Being and Creator of all existence
- One who serves entities that serve as intermediary between him and the eternal Lord such as stars, constellations or any other entity

According to Hilchot Teshuva 3:6 *minim* do not have a portion in the world to come. Their souls are cut off and they are judged for their sins.^[1]

The *Birkat haMinim* is a malediction on heretics. The belief that the curse was directed at Christians was sometimes cause for persecution of Jews. Modern scholarship has generally

evaluated that the *Birkat haMinim* probably did originally include Jewish Christians before Christianity became markedly a gentile religion.

The Text: Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 91a

א"ל ההוא מינא לגביהא בן פסיסא
ווי לכון חייביא דאמריתון מייתי חייך דחייך מייתי דמייתי חייך
א"ל ווי לכון חייביא דאמריתון מייתי לא חייך דלא הוו חיי דהוי חיי לא כ"ש
א"ל חייביא קרית לי אי קאימנא בעיטנא בדך ופשיטנא לעקמותך מינדך
א"ל אם אתה עושה כן רופא אומן תקרא ושכר הרבה תטול

A certain sectarian said to Geviha ben Pesisa: Woe to *you*, O sinners, for you say that the dead will live. Now, if even the living eventually die, is it credible that the dead will live?

[Gehiva] said to him: Woe to you, O sinners, for you say the dead will *not* live. Now, if even the non-existent come to life, is it not all the more possible that those who once lived will live again?

The sectarian retorted angrily: You dare call *me* "sinners"? If I arise, I will kick you so hard that I will straighten out your hump!

[Gehiva] said to him: If you do that, you will be called a skilled doctor and command a large fee for your medical services!



Explaining the Structure of the Story

What is the sequence of events in the story?

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? What is the discussion between the sectarian and Geviha ben Pesisa about? What do you think about the arguments of each of them?

Bonus ? How do you know that Geviha ben Pesisa is having the argument on behalf of the Jewish community and not only on behalf of himself?

? Why does the sectarian call the Jews "sinners"?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

? Why does Geviha ben Pesisa call the sectarians "sinners"?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Bonus ? Why does the sectarian react violently towards Geviha ben Pesisa?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Answer 4 _____

Bonus ? Why doesn't Geviha ben Pesisa react violently towards the sectarian?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

Answer 4 _____

? What do you think about Geviha ben Pesisa's answer to the sectarian?

Bonus ? The exchange of opinions between Geviha ben Pesisa and the sectarian on the resurrection of the dead ends abruptly after the violent threat from the sectarian and Geviha ben Pesisa's reply never to be resumed. Why?

"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

! Dealing with "violent" people: the do's and don'ts as taught by Geviha ben Pesisa.