

CHAPTER LIV

RESURRECTION, A NATIONAL HOPE

1. The Jewish belief in resurrection is intimately bound up with the hope for the restoration of the Israelitish nation on its own soil, and consequently rather national; indeed, originally purely local and territorial.¹ True, the rabbis justified their belief in resurrection by such Scriptural verses as: "I kill and I make alive"² and "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up."³ Founded on such passages, the belief would have to include all men, and could be confined neither to the Jewish people nor to the land of Judea. However, we find no trace of such a belief in the entire Bible save for two late post-exilic passages⁴ which are in fact apocalyptic, being based upon earlier prophecies, and themselves, in turn, basic to the later dogma of the Pharisees.

2. The picture of a resurrection was first drawn by the prophet Hosea, who applied it to Israel. In his distress over the destiny of his people he says: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us, He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us, on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His presence."⁵ Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones which rose to a new life under the mighty sway of the spirit of God,⁶ gave more definite shape to the picture,

¹ See J. E., art. Resurrection.

² Deut. XXXII, 39; see Sifre ad loc.

³ I Sam. II, 6; see Midr. Sh'muel, ad loc.

⁴ Isa. XXVI, 19; Dan. XII, 2.

⁵ Hosea VI, 1-2; comp. XIII, 14.

⁶ Ezek. XXXVII, 1-14.

although in the form of allegory. As the prophet himself says, he aimed to describe the resurrection of Judah and Israel from their grave of exile. The obscure Messianic prophecy in Isaiah, chapters XXIV to XXVII, strikes a new note. First the author deals with the terrible slaughter which God will inflict upon the heathen, after which "He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of His people will He take away from off all the earth."¹ Finally, when the oppressors of Israel are completely annihilated, exclaims the seer: "Thy dead shall live, thy dead bodies shall arise — awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust — for thy dew is a fructifying dew, and the earth shall bring to life the shades."² Daniel speaks in a similar vein: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to reproaches and everlasting abhorrence."³

3. In this hope for resurrection at the end of days the leading thought is that the prophecies which have been unfulfilled during the lifetime of the pious, and particularly the martyrs, shall be realized in the world to come.⁴ In the oldest apocalyptic writings this life of the future is still conceived as earthly bliss, inasmuch as the writers think only of the Messianic time of national glory, depicted in such glowing colors by the prophets. Unbounded richness of the soil and numerous offspring, abundant treasures brought by remote nations and their rulers, peace and happiness far and wide — such are the characteristics of the Messianic

¹ Isa. XXV, 8.

² Isa. XXVI, 19. Instead of "my dead bodies" in the new Bible translation, read "thy dead," and instead of "light" translate *oroth*, after II Kings IV, 39, "herb," which means "dew of revival"; the last is also a rabbinic term.

³ Dan. XII, 2.

⁴ See II Macc. VII, 9-36; XII, 43; XIV, 46; Sibyll. II, 47; Midr. Teh. Ps. XVII, 13.

age. In order that the dead may share in all this, it is to be preceded by the resurrection and the great *Day of Judgment* in the valley of Jehoshaphat or Gehinnom (Gehenna), where the righteous are to be singled out to participate in the realm of the Messiah.¹ As a national prospect the Messianic hope was based upon the passage in Deutero-Isaiah: "Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever."² Consequently an ancient Mishnah taught that "All Israel shall have a share in the world to come."³ In fact, the term "inherit the land" was used as late as the Mishnah to express the idea of sharing in the future life; so also in the New Testament, where the resurrection was expected before the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah.⁴

4. The logical assumption was, accordingly, that only the dead of the holy land should enjoy the resurrection. The prophetic verses were cited: "I will set glory in the land of the living,"⁵ and "He that giveth breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein,"⁶ and were interpreted in the sense that God would restore the breath of life only to those buried in the holy land.⁷ Likewise the verse of the Psalmist, "I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living," was referred to Palestine, as the land where the dead shall awaken to a new life.⁸ Hence the rabbis held the strange belief that when the great heavenly trumpet is sounded to summon all the tribes of Israel from the ends of the earth to the holy land,⁹ those who have been buried outside of Palestine must pass through cavities under the earth, until they reach the soil where the miracle of the

¹ See Joel IV, 2; Erub. 19 a, ref. to Isa. XXXI, 9; Enoch XXVIII, 1.

² Isa. LX, 21.

³ Sanh. X, 1.

⁴ Kid. I, 10; Matt. V, 5, ref. to Ps. XXXVII, 11; Enoch V, 7.

⁵ Ezek. XXVI, 20.

⁶ Isa. XLII, 5.

⁷ Keth. 111 a.

⁸ Ps. CXVI, 9; Yer. Keth. XII, 35 b; Pesik. R, I, 2 b.

⁹ Ber. 15 b; Alphabet d. R. Akiba in Jellinek, B. H. III, 31; Targum Yer. to Ex. XX, 15; I Cor. XV, 52.

resurrection will be performed.¹ It has, therefore, become a custom of the pious among the Orthodox to this very day, in case they could not bury the dead in Palestine, to put dust of the holy land beneath their head, that they might arise wherever they were buried.

5. We may take it for granted that this naïve conception of the resurrection could not be permanent, and so was modified to include a double resurrection: the first, national, to usher in the Messianic kingdom, and the other, universal, to usher in the everlasting life of the future. The former offered scant room for the heathen world, at best only for those who had actually joined the ranks of Judaism; the latter, however, included the last judgment for all souls and thus opened the way for the salvation of the righteous among the nations as well as the people of Israel. At this point the conception of resurrection led to higher and more spiritual ideas, as has been shown in Chapter XLIII.

6. However, the belief in the resurrection of the body, though expressed in the ancient liturgy, is in such utter contradiction to our entire attitude toward both science and religion, that it may be considered obsolete for the modern Jew. Orthodoxy, which clings to it in formal loyalty to tradition, regards it as a miracle which God will perform in the future, exactly like the many Biblical miracles which defy reason.

7. The Zionist movement has given many Jews a new attitude toward the national resurrection of Israel. The nationalists expect the Jewish nation to awaken from a sleep of eighteen hundred years to new greatness in its ancient home, not as a religious, but as a political body, and in renouncing all allegiance to the priestly mission of Israel and its ancestral faith they are as remote from genuine Orthodoxy as from Reform Judaism. They assert that the soul of the

¹ Keth. l. c.

Jewish people requires a national body rooted in its ancient soil in order that it may fulfill its appointed task among the nations; they even go so far as to declare all the achievements brought about by the assimilation of the culture of the surrounding nations to be a deterioration of the genuine character of the Jewish nation. The fact is that, as in nature there is nowhere a resurrection of the dead but an ever renewed regeneration of life, so is the history of the Jew and of Judaism a continuous process of regeneration manifested at every great turning-point of history, when the ideas and cultural elements of a new civilization exert their powerful influence on life and thought. There never was, nor will be an exclusively Jewish culture. It is the wondrous power of assimilation of the Jew which ever created and fashioned his culture anew. That which constitutes the peculiarity of the Jew and his life force is his religion fostered through the ages, preserved amidst the most antagonistic influences and hostile environments, and ever rejuvenated by its unique universalistic spirit when revived by contact with kindred movements. To maintain and propagate this, his religion in all lands and amidst all civilizations, is the task assigned to him by Providence, until God's Kingdom has been established all over the globe.

CHAPTER LV

ISRAEL AND THE HEATHEN NATIONS

1. As there is but one Creator and Ruler of the universe, so there is before Him but one humanity. All the nations are under His guidance, while Israel, His chosen people, points to the kingdom of God which is to embrace them all. Israel was called the "first-born son" of God¹ at the very moment of his election, implying that all the sons of men are His children. All of them are links in the divine plan of salvation. In the same sense God spoke through Isaiah: "Blessed be Egypt, My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance."² As the first page of Scripture assigns a common origin to them all in the first man, so, the prophets tell us, at the end of time they shall all be filled with longing for the one God and form with Israel one community on earth, a great brotherhood of man serving the common Father above.³ Still, the actual world began, not with the unity, but with the wide diversity and dispersion of mankind. The idea of the unity of man came as a corollary to the kindred conception of the unity of God, after a long historical process.

Just as the creation of the world opens with the separation of light from darkness, so the process of the spiritual and moral development of mankind begins, according to the divine plan of salvation, with the separation of Israel from the heathen nations.⁴ The sharper the contrast became

¹ Ex. IV, 22.

² Isa. XIX, 25.

³ Isa. XLII, 4; XLV, 23; LI, 5; Zeph. III, 9; Zech. VIII, 22; XIV, 9.

⁴ Lev. XX, 26; Deut. XX, 16-18; comp. Gen. R. II, 4; III, 10.