

Ask The Rabbi – January 18 2022

Question:

When we die do we go to heaven?

Response:

Where do we go when we die has been just as common a question as the answer that follows it. For believers the perception is that when we die, united with Messiah we go to heaven.

I had recently attended a memorial service and the premise that was consistently and without division, presented was that he was in heaven and we would see him again in heaven.

Does Scripture support the premise that when we die, we go to heaven?

I see three aspects found within the New Covenant writings that are used to support this position. The first is more of a perception while the second, two scriptures are each an interpretation of a single verse.

The first aspect, the perception is that of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is also referred to as the Kingdom of Heaven.

Being the Kingdom of Heaven, referred to by Matthew 30 times in his Gospel.

Mat 3:1 It was during those days that Yochanan the Immerser arrived in the desert of Y'hudah and began proclaiming the message,

Mat 3:2 "Turn from your sins to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!"

The only other time it is mentioned in the New Covenant writings is Luke's Gospel:

Luk 7:28 I tell you that among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than Yochanan the Immerser! Yet the one who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he!"

The Kingdom of God is referenced in the New Covenant writings 63 times while being referenced in the Gospels specifically 49 times:

- Matthew - 4
- Mark - 13
- Luke - 30
- John – 2

Kingdom of Heaven. The word "Heaven" was used in pious avoidance of the word "God" (see [Mat 1:20](#)); and to this day Hebrew *malkhut-haShamayim* ("Kingdom of Heaven") substitutes in Jewish religious literature for "**Kingdom of God**," an expression found frequently in the New Testament, first at 6:33 below. In the Jewish New Testament "Heaven" is capitalized when it refers to God; "heaven" is in lower-case when it refers to the sky or paradise.

The concept of the **Kingdom of God** is crucial to understanding the Bible. It refers neither to a place nor to a time, but to a condition in which the rulership of God is acknowledged by humankind, a condition in which God's promises of a restored universe free from sin and death are, or begin to be, fulfilled.

In relation to the **Kingdom of God** history can be divided into four periods: before Yeshua, during his lifetime, the present age (the 'olam hazeh) and the future age (the 'olam haba). There was a sense in which the Kingdom was present prior to Yeshua's birth; indeed, God was king over the Jewish people (see [1Sa 12:12](#)). Yeshua's arrival brought a quantum leap in the earthly expression of the Kingdom, "For in him, bodily, lives the fullness of all that God is" ([Col 2:9](#)). (Jewish New Testament Commentary – David Stern)

Thus the perception within Church theology differs from that of Jewish understanding. Considering that the Kingdom is neither a place, that being a destination, nor a point in time in that time does not exist within Eternity we must then view it differently.

The two verses that are used to support our destination upon death are:

[2Co 5:8](#) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (KJV)

I am using the King James version here in that they are frequently quoted and thus familiar when heard.

In 2 Corinthians 5:8 Sha'ul conveys that if we are absent of our bodies then we are present with the Lord, Yeshua. The premise is further expanded that Yeshua resides in heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Thus if He is in heaven and we are present with Him, then we must be present too. Yet, what do we know about Adonai and thus Yeshua in that they are one? We know that Adonai and thus Yeshua are:

- Omnipotent - having unlimited power and thus is able to do anything.
- Omniscient – having the ability of knowing everything
- Omnipresent - widely or constantly encountered; common or widespread.

Thus, in knowing there are no limits or boundaries to Adonai and thus Yeshua, yet we infuse our own limits and boundaries upon Him, thus establishing a finite answer.

"He resides in Heaven and thus we must reside with Him in heaven."

Yet, when we read Sha'ul's writing in its full context, rather than isolating a single verse there is more available for us to understand.

[2Co 5:1](#) We know that when the tent which houses us here on earth is torn down, we have a permanent building from God, a building not made by human hands, to house us in heaven.

[2Co 5:2](#) For in this tent, our earthly body, we groan with desire to have around us the home from heaven that will be ours.

[2Co 5:3](#) With this around us we will not be found naked.

[2Co 5:4](#) Yes, while we are in this body, we groan with the sense of being oppressed: it is not so much that we want to take something off, but rather to put something on over it; so that what must die may be swallowed up by the Life.

[2Co 5:5](#) Moreover, it is God who has prepared us for this very thing, and as a pledge he has given us his Spirit.

[2Co 5:6](#) So we are always confident—we know that so long as we are at home in the body, we are away from our home with the Lord;

[2Co 5:7](#) for we live by trust, not by what we see.

[2Co 5:8](#) We are confident, then, and would much prefer to leave our home in the body and come to our home with the Lord.

2Co 5:9 Therefore, whether at home or away from home, we try our utmost to please him;

2Co 5:10 for we must all appear before the Messiah's court of judgment, where everyone will receive the good or bad consequences of what he did while he was in the body.

Heaven is not the only place not made by human hands. The earth was not formed by one set of human hands nor one trillion sets of human hands. When we go back to verse one, it is referring to a place in the heavens that exists for us, not made by human hands that is there for us. Further, Sha'ul is referring to our house that is from heaven in verse 2. I believe Sha'ul is referencing the Prophet Yesha'yahu (Isaiah), first of the house, the place being prepared for us:

Isa 65:17 "For, look! I create new heavens and a new earth; past things will not be remembered, they will no more come to mind.

Isa 65:18 So be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for look! I am making Yerushalayim a joy, and her people a delight.

Isa 65:19 I will rejoice in Yerushalayim and take joy in my people. The sound of weeping will no longer be heard in it, no longer the sound of crying.

Isa 65:20 No more will babies die in infancy, no more will an old man die short of his days—he who dies at a hundred will be thought young, and at less than a hundred thought cursed.

Isa 65:21 They will build houses and live in them, they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

Isa 65:22 They will not build and others live there, they will not plant and others eat; for the days of my people will be like the days of a tree, and my chosen will themselves enjoy the use of what they make.

Isa 65:23 They will not toil in vain or raise children to be destroyed, for they are the seed blessed by Adonai; and their offspring with them.

Isa 65:24 Before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear.

Isa 65:25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion eat straw like an ox (but the serpent—its food will be dust). They will not hurt or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain," says Adonai.

And thus the image of the Kingdom that will ensue

Then the Prophet speaks of heaven:

Isa 66:1 "Heaven is my throne," says Adonai, "and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house could you build for me? What sort of place could you devise for my rest?"

Isa 66:2 Didn't I myself make all these things? This is how they all came to be," says Adonai. "The kind of person on whom I look with favor is one with a poor and humble spirit, who trembles at my word.

Heaven is throne of Adonai and only He resides on it. The imagery of Yeshua sitting at His right hand is not a literal depiction, yet is an allusion to a place of honor and distinction.

Psa 110:1 [*A psalm of David:*] Adonai says to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

And thus was understood within this context, even by Yeshua's talmidim when they asked...

Mar 10:35 Ya`akov and Yochanan, the sons of Zavdai, came up to him and said, "Rabbi, we would like you to do us a favor."

Mar 10:36 He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Mar 10:37 They replied, "When you are in your glory, let us sit with you, one on your right and the other on your left."

Mar 10:38 But Yeshua answered, "You don't know what you're asking! Can you drink the cup that I am drinking? or be immersed with the immersion that I must undergo?"

Mar 10:39 They said to him, "We can." Yeshua replied, "The cup that I am drinking, you will drink; and the immersion I am being immersed with, you will undergo."

Mar 10:40 But to sit on my right and on my left is not mine to give. Rather, it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

This is the concept of the Kingdom of Adonai, the Kingdom of Heaven. Not a place we go to, but a place that will come to us.

Rev 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer there.

Rev 21:2 Also I saw the holy city, New Yerushalayim, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

There will be a "time" when it will be revealed to us and it is at the end of time and when Eternity resumes.

The second passage comes from another writing of Sha'ul – Ephesians:

This second passage is perceived as Yeshua going gather us at the time between His death and resurrection during the three days in the tomb.

Eph 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Eph 4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

Eph 4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) (KJV)

In verse 8, Sha'ul is actually referencing Psalm 68:18, quoting it as part of the verses that are to follow, where the emphasis of Adonai giving gifts.

Psa 68:18 After you went up into the heights, you led captivity captive, you took gifts among mankind, yes, even among the rebels, so that Yah, God, might live there.

Yet this verse is used to convey that Yeshua went into the depths of the earth and gather the "saints" of the Old Testament and thus close what is known as Avraham's Boosom. Yet, in the context of this entire passage, Sha'ul is not referring to anything of the kind.

When we look at the context of Sha'ul's letter to believers in Ephesus, we should understand the following...

We are to recognize everything God has done in chapters 1-3 and thus recognize what Sha'ul calls on believers to do in chapters 4-6, all of which is summed up in the phrase, "**lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.**"

Eph 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner united with the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which

you have been called.

Eph 4:2 Always be humble, gentle and patient, bearing with one another in love,

Eph 4:3 and making every effort to preserve the unity the Spirit gives through the binding power of shalom.

Eph 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as when you were called you were called to one hope.

Eph 4:5 And there is one Lord, one trust, one immersion,

Eph 4:6 and one God, the Father of all, who rules over all, works through all and is in all.

Eph 4:7 Each one of us, however, has been given grace to be measured by the Messiah's bounty.

Eph 4:8 This is why it says, "After he went up into the heights, he led captivity captive and he gave gifts to mankind."

Eph 4:9 Now this phrase, "he went up," what can it mean if not that he first went down into the lower parts, that is, the earth?

Eph 4:10 The one who went down is himself the one who also went up, far above all of heaven, in order to fill all things.

Eph 4:11 Furthermore, he gave some people as emissaries, some as prophets, some as proclaimers of the Good News, and some as shepherds and teachers.

Eph 4:12 Their task is to equip God's people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah,

Eph 4:13 until we all arrive at the unity implied by trusting and knowing the Son of God, at full manhood, at the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection.

Eph 4:14 We will then no longer be infants tossed about by the waves and blown along by every wind of teaching, at the mercy of people clever in devising ways to deceive.

Eph 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in every respect grow up into him who is the head, the Messiah.

Eph 4:16 Under his control, the whole body is being fitted and held together by the support of every joint, with each part working to fulfill its function; this is how the body grows and builds itself up in love.

What are the gifts spoken of by Sha'ul after the verses that are used to justify Yeshua's gathering of "old testament saints" but what is known as the five fold ministry. Their purpose, prepare the people for the Kingdom that is to come when Messiah returns.

As it pertains to verse nine and the reference in the KJV as "the lower parts of the earth", the CJB refers to the lower parts as being the earth. This reference is based on Yeshua's descension from heaven to earth in order to provide and thus equip those with the gifts that are required for equipping and thus building the Kingdom of believers in Messiah.

Eph 4:9 Now this phrase, "he went up," what can it mean if not that he first went down into the lower parts, that is, the earth?

Any other understanding would be outside of the context of the premise by which Sha'ul is conveying. Further, I don't see a remez (hint) or sod (mystery) in this verse either. The context of the passage is clear, yet what has happened is another context has been infused, ignoring the primary context and thus creating a narrative that need not be created because there are other passages that will be able to answer our question for this evening.

Now, I have shared with you some of the misconceptions as it pertains to believers dying and going to heaven. Yet, if I did not provide you with what does happen, then I would be creating a vacuum and thus

opened the door for other theories to take the place of this one.

We know there is a place and Scripture has alluded to it.

When David's son died he conveyed...

2Sa 12:18 On the seventh day, the child died. The servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, because they said, "While the child was still alive, we spoke to him, and he didn't listen to us; if we tell him now that the child is dead, he may do himself some harm."

2Sa 12:19 But when David saw his servants whispering to each other, he suspected that the child was dead. David asked his servants, "Is the child dead?" and they answered, "He is dead."

2Sa 12:20 Then David got up off the ground, washed, anointed himself and changed his clothes. He went into the house of Adonai and worshipped; then he went to his own palace; and when he asked for food, they served it to him; and he ate.

2Sa 12:21 His servants asked him, "What are you doing? You fasted and wept for the child while it was alive; but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat food!"

2Sa 12:22 He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; because I thought, 'Maybe Adonai will show his grace to me and let the child live.'

2Sa 12:23 But now that he's dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

We read of King Sha'ul summoning Shm'uel from the dead.

1Sa 28:4 The P'lishtim assembled; then they went and pitched camp at Shunem; while Sha'ul gathered all Isra'el together and pitched camp at Gilboa.

1Sa 28:5 When Sha'ul saw the army of the P'lishtim, he became afraid—it struck terror in his heart.

1Sa 28:6 But when he consulted Adonai, Adonai didn't answer him—not by dreams, not by urim and not by prophets.

1Sa 28:7 Then Sha'ul said to his servants, "Try to find a woman who tells the future by communicating with the dead; I want to go and consult with her." His servants answered him, "Yes, there's a woman in `Ein-Dor who tells the future by communicating with the dead."

1Sa 28:8 So Sha'ul disguised himself by wearing different clothing, went with two men, came to the woman by night and said, "Tell me the future, please. Bring up from the dead the person I name to you."

1Sa 28:9 The woman answered, "Here, you know what Sha'ul did, how he expelled from the land those who tell the future by communicating with the dead or with a demonic spirit. Why are you trying to entrap me into causing my own death?"

1Sa 28:10 But Sha'ul swore to her by Adonai, "As Adonai lives, you will not be punished for doing this."

1Sa 28:11 Then the woman asked, "Whom should I bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up for me Sh'mu'el."

1Sa 28:12 When the woman saw Sh'mu'el, she let out a shriek. Then the woman said to Sha'ul, "Why have you deceived me? You yourself are Sha'ul!"

1Sa 28:13 The king replied, "Don't be afraid. Just tell me what you see." The woman said to Sha'ul, "I see a god-like being coming up out of the earth."

1Sa 28:14 He asked her, "What does he look like?" She said, "An old man is coming up; he's wearing a cloak." Sha'ul realized it was Sh'mu'el, so he bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself.

1Sa 28:15 Sh'mu'el asked Sha'ul, "Why have you disturbed me and brought me up?" Sha'ul answered, "I'm

very upset; because the P'lishtim are making war against me; and God has left me and doesn't answer me any more, neither by prophets nor by dreams. This is why I've called you, so that you can let me know what to do."

Thus there is a place we do go. Not our physical earthly bodies, but that which resides in this tabernacle, this temporary vessel. Yeshua alludes to it at the time of His death when He is speaking to the thieves that are also being put to death.

Luk 23:32 Two other men, both criminals, were led out to be executed with him.

Luk 23:33 When they came to the place called The Skull, they nailed him to a stake; and they nailed the criminals to stakes, one on the right and one on the left.

Luk 23:34 Yeshua said, "Father, forgive them; they don't understand what they are doing." They divided up his clothes by throwing dice.

Luk 23:35 The people stood watching, and the rulers sneered at him. "He saved others," they said, "so if he really is the Messiah, the one chosen by God, let him save himself!"

Luk 23:36 The soldiers too ridiculed him; they came up, offered him vinegar

Luk 23:37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!"

Luk 23:38 And there was a notice over him which read, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS

Luk 23:39 One of the criminals hanging there hurled insults at him. "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

Luk 23:40 But the other one spoke up and rebuked the first, saying, "Have you no fear of God? You're getting the same punishment as he is.

Luk 23:41 Ours is only fair; we're getting what we deserve for what we did. But this man did nothing wrong."

Luk 23:42 Then he said, "Yeshua, remember me when you come as King."

Luk 23:43 Yeshua said to him, "Yes! I promise that you will be with me today in Gan-'Eden."

Gan-Eden, otherwise known as Paradise, that is a reference to the Garden, before the fall of man and the introduction of sin into the world through one man.

***Gan-Eden**, literally, "Garden of Eden" in Hebrew, is also Hebrew's expression for "Paradise," which is the English transliteration of Greek paradeisos, the term used in the Septuagint at [Gen 2:8](#) to translate Gan-Eden. Paradeisos itself comes from the Persian word "pardes," which has been taken into Hebrew; it means "enclosure, preserve, garden, park, citrus orchard," as well as "Paradise" (Jewish New Testament Commentary – David Stern)*

So, what exactly is Paradise referred to by Yeshua to the repentant thief?

He actually shares a parable involving a rich man and a beggar name El'azar.

Luk 16:19 "Once there was a rich man who used to dress in the most expensive clothing and spent his days in magnificent luxury.

Luk 16:20 At his gate had been laid a beggar named El'azar who was covered with sores.

Luk 16:21 He would have been glad to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man's table; but instead, even the dogs would come and lick his sores.

Luk 16:22 In time the beggar died and was carried away by the angels to Avraham's side; the rich man also

died and was buried.

Luk 16:23 "In Sh'ol, where he was in torment, the rich man looked up and saw Avraham far away with El'azar at his side.

Luk 16:24 He called out, 'Father Avraham, take pity on me, and send El'azar just to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, because I'm in agony in this fire!'

Luk 16:25 However, Avraham said, 'Son, remember that when you were alive, you got the good things while he got the bad; but now he gets his consolation here, while you are the one in agony.

Luk 16:26 Yet that isn't all: between you and us a deep rift has been established, so that those who would like to pass from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

Luk 16:27 "He answered, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house,

Luk 16:28 where I have five brothers, to warn them; so that they may be spared having to come to this place of torment too.'

Luk 16:29 But Avraham said, 'They have Moshe and the Prophets; they should listen to them.'

Luk 16:30 However, he said, 'No, father Avraham, they need more. If someone from the dead goes to them, they'll repent!'

Luk 16:31 But he replied, 'If they won't listen to Moshe and the Prophets, they won't be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!' "

Why would Yeshua offer up such a parable?

Why would he reveal such things if they are not important for us to understand?

One justification that I have heard shared with me directly is in order to justify that this place, also known as Avraham's Bossom is now empty. Yet here is another inconsistency as it pertains to where we go upon our death. If our souls truly go to heaven, then upon Yeshua's return, how can this happen?

1Th 4:13 Now, brothers, we want you to know the truth about those who have died; otherwise, you might become sad the way other people

1Th 4:14 do who have nothing to hope for. For since we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, we also believe that in the same way God, through Yeshua, will take with him those who have died.

1Th 4:15 When we say this, we base it on the Lord's own word: we who remain alive when the Lord comes will certainly not take precedence over those who have died.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a rousing cry, with a call from one of the ruling angels, and with God's shofar; those who died united with the Messiah will be the first to rise;

1Th 4:17 then we who are left still alive will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will always be with the Lord.

How can the dead rise from heaven when Yeshua will descend from Heaven to earth?

Wherever Paradise may be there is one thing to know. In order for us to rise from the dead it must be in a proximity related to Heaven that is somewhere below Heaven itself.

Thus our destination, both at the time of death and in the Kingdom is not, nor has it ever been Heaven. Our place is and will be earth, whether it is this existing earth as we know it today or the new earth that will appear at the end after Adonai's plan for dealing with transgression and its father has been completed.

